

The Gordian Knot – Chapter 1 – Meet The Folks

He was walking a line; a very thin line. On three sides of his hiding place were cops who didn't have the real story. They were looking for him and were told that he was armed and dangerous. He was armed and he was dangerous, but not in the way they meant it. They had an APB/BOLO out on him and had his prints and picture. He was wanted for murder, but like I said, they didn't have the real story. To make matters worse, the cops weren't the only people looking for him. The people that the cops should be looking for instead of Ron were up ahead, fanned out with those AK-47's. Thank God he wasn't empty handed.

Sandy lived in student housing at UCLA and was a grad student in Paleontology. He met her at a Hamburger Hamlet there in Westwood when she'd bumped into him and spilt his drink. They had gotten into one of those "excuse me" contests each trying to outdo the other. He eaten and had forgotten about it and went out to get in his car. Someone had pulled in way too close on the driver's side and on the passenger side and he just couldn't get in. So, he sat on the trunk and waited for either of the drivers to show up and move his or her car.

"Hey, long time no see," Ron laughed when Sandy walked up and began unlocking her door.

"I'm sorry, did I block you in?" she'd asked.

"I don't know if it was you or the other guy; by the way, my name is Ron," he replied. "That guy must have had to get out of the passenger side of his car," he said indicating the car on the other side.

"I feel so bad," Sandy said, "First I spilled your drink all over you and then trapped you in the sun. My name is Sandy."

They visited for a few minutes and she said maybe she could buy him a drink sometime to make up for all of the trouble she'd caused. She gave him a slip of paper with her name and address and number on it. Ron worked at one of the few remaining gun stores in Los Angeles. He got busy and completely forgot about Sandy. Then, one day, who should walk into the store looking for a handgun but Sandy? She wanted something fairly compact in a semi-auto but didn't know one gun from another. He asked what she wanted it for and she was very evasive. But, she wanted to know about those leather purses that were made to conceal a handgun.

"This is the Glock 23," Ron said. "It's sort of a midsized handgun in .40 Smith & Wesson."

"It's all Greek to me," Sandy said.

"It's the cartridge that the FBI uses," Ron explained.

“It must be pretty powerful then,” Sandy replied with more than a little skepticism.

“The 10mm cartridge is powerful, this is a little more tame,” Ron remarked. “Say have you ever fired a handgun before?”

“No, I don’t know a thing about guns,” Sandy replied.

“You need to take a safety class and then spend a fair amount of time on a range,” Ron explained. “And to buy a handgun in California, you need to take a test and pass it, and then wait 15 days for delivery.”

“Do you have a study guide or something?” Sandy asked.

Ron gave her the study guide and she said she’d be back. And about 3 days later she was back and he noticed offhand that she was carrying a new shoulder bag. He recognized the bag as a black Galco Dyna Holster Purse that they sold in the store. Sandy took the test and passed and filled out federal form 4473 to purchase the Glock 23. She asked about magazines and he told her that the pistol came with a 10-round magazine but that she could buy 15 round magazines now that the AWB had been lifted. Unfortunately, this was still California and 15 round magazines were still illegal. But, he had 10 round magazines if she wanted them.

“I’ll pass on the 10-round magazines, Ron,” Sandy said. “I’ve got to drive over to Phoenix in the next few days anyway.”

“Don’t get caught with high capacity magazines, Sandy,” Ron cautioned.

“I wouldn’t think of breaking the law,” she replied.

“OK, you can pick the pistol up in 15 days,” Ron said, “Assuming your background check is ok. How do you want to pay for that?”

“Do you still take cash?” she asked.

The state of California doesn’t have a law that says the Sheriff must issue a concealed weapons permit. In fact, in Los Angeles County they were almost impossible to get. That wasn’t Ron’s problem, he figured, and if she got caught carrying a gun then it would be her chest in the wringer, not his. Fifteen days later, Sandy was back and picked up the pistol. She also bought a set of ear protectors and 10 boxes of 155 grain Federal Premium Hydra-Shok ammo.

“What are you going to use all of the ammo for Sandy?” Ron asked.

“You said that I needed to learn to use the weapon so I’ve gotten an instructor from the Beverly Hills Gun Club,” she replied.

“I could teach you and I wouldn’t charge you,” Ron offered.

“I have range time tonight at 7pm, if you can make it fine, otherwise I’ll go with the other guy,” she responded.

The Beverly Hills Gun Club (BHGC, which is not in Beverly Hills) offers a curious mix of urban vigilantism and California environmental sensitivity. Posters of Eastwood and Stallone adorn the walls. Flyers advertise various self-defense courses. (“State Certified Tear Gas Instructor Rudy Pichardo presents ‘Citizen Mace.’”) But everyone who wants to shoot must sign a waiver warning that the noise could damage their hearing and that the particles generated from bullets hitting the backdrop could expose them to lead poisoning.

Ron got to the BHGC just in time to meet Sandy before she was scheduled to meet with the instructor. She cancelled the training session and he took her to the range. First he went through safety fundamentals, several times and then, they began to shoot. He corrected errors she was making and by the end of the session he had to admit she was shooting pretty well, especially at close range. He told her that she’d need to clean the pistol and that he’d brought her a cleaning kit from the store. He offered to buy her coffee and then, if she was ok with it, they could go somewhere and clean the pistol.

“I owe you a drink, remember,” Sandy said. “The thing is that I live in campus housing and I can’t be sitting there cleaning a pistol.”

“We could go to my place, if it’s ok with you,” Ron offered.

“Sure, why not?” she said.

“You follow me and I’ll go to my apartment,” Ron said. “If you get lost, stop at the corner of Beverly Boulevard and La Brea and I’ll come get you.”

“I think that I can find that ok, I spend a lot of time at the Tar Pits,” she replied.

“Oh?” he asked.

“Yes, I’m a grad student in Paleontology at UCLA.”

“Here a piece of paper with my address on it,” he said handing her a slip of paper.

When they arrived at the apartment, Sandy was waiting at the front door of the building. He let her in and showed her to his apartment.

“Can I get you something to drink?” he asked.

“Something soft,” she replied, “Got a diet anything?”

“Coke or Pepsi?” he asked.

“Coke would be fine,” she answered.

Ron got her a cold diet Coke out of the refrigerator and sat down at the kitchen table to show her how to clean the pistol. She got the hang of it quickly and he almost wondered about her statement that she didn't know a thing about guns. After they were done cleaning the pistol, she put it in its box but didn't reload the magazine. Oh, well. Then they got to visiting, getting to know one another.

Sandra Marshall was from the San Fernando Valley, Van Nuys to be exact. She stayed in campus housing because the commute over the Sepulveda Pass was 'impossible', according to her. Her father was dead, heart attack, and her mother had remarried and moved to San Francisco. She was working on a project that involved her spending a lot of time at the La Brea Tar Pits.

Ronald Hardwood was from the Midwest, he said, and had just stayed in California after he'd gotten out of the Army. He'd been OpFor at Ft. Irwin, he explained, before he'd gotten out. Sandy was 23 and he was 25. She didn't date much she said since she'd had a problem with a boyfriend. This nut was actually stalking her and she'd had to get a restraining order against him. Ron allowed that he didn't date much either. He might meet someone in a singles bar, but there was nobody he'd liked well enough to bring home. He also said that he didn't drink much and he didn't even know why he bothered. Sandy also noticed that there were no ashtrays and that was just fine with her.

“I have an early class, so I'd better go,” Sandy said, “What do I owe you for the cleaning kit?”

“Ah, forget it,” Ron replied. “Say would you like to go out for a drink and dancing some night?”

“Sure, you've got my number, give me a call,” Sandy said.

“I'll do that,” Ron replied.

And, eventually he finally did. Sandy and Ron had hit it off very well and started to date on an infrequent basis. Then, over the next year or so, it had gotten a little more serious. Sandy completed her Master's degree and started on her PhD. Ron got promoted to Assistant Manager of the gun store. Ron more or less realized that he was falling in love with Sandy and suspected that she felt the same. That ex-boyfriend who had been the problem apparently was pulling some time in County for assault. The guy and Sandy had gone to school together in Van Nuys, but he'd gotten in with the wrong crowd and, over a period of time, had turned violent. She finally told the guy to get lost, but he didn't choose to get the hint. Finally, after he'd slapped her around and threatened to kill her; no witnesses, she'd gotten the LAPD involved and had gotten the restraining order.

After that, he'd shown up a few times and threatened her, but never when anyone was around. She'd gotten the LAPD involved again, but he always had an alibi that the cops couldn't break. By this time, Don was running with a bunch of hard cases, mostly ex-cons. Not that the cops believed him, but it was her word against his and several of his friends. And since the cops couldn't find a single witness, the DA said that their hands were tied. That had gotten her into the gun store.

Sandy admitted that she'd done some shopping in Arizona and had purchased 5 15-round magazines for the Glock. She kept one in the gun and 4 in her Galco purse. She had also taken the pepper spray class and had a pepper spray dispenser on her key-chain. She said that she didn't know if that would be enough to stop the guy and had finally gotten the pistol. She was getting a lot of phone calls from an empty line and when the cops investigated those, they were all from payphones. But, since Don had been in County she hadn't had any more of the calls.

Ron had invested just about every penny he earned while he was in the Army in a gun collection. He saved and saved and his first purchase had been a Springfield Armory Super Match rifle with an optional Krieger barrel and the McMillan Marine Corps camo stock. His second purchase had been a Springfield Armory custom-loaded TRP model 1911-A1. "The TRP standard line is designed around the same specifications as the FBI contract pistol, the TRP-PRO MODEL. The Springfield TRP offers nearly the same performance and features as the TRP-PRO MODEL at a fraction of the cost. From its fully checkered front strap and mainspring housing, to its durable Armory Kote Teflon or stainless steel finish, this gun can only be described as a knock-out value."

Both weapons had cost him about the same amount of money, which was a lot. A Sergeant friend of his in supply had come up with some of the 20-round magazines from a friend of his at 29 Palms Marine Corp Air/Ground Combat Center. And, he'd bought 3 extra magazines for the pistol (it came with 2). His preferred load for the pistol was the Federal 165-grain Hydra-Shok JHP. For his M1A, he had 175gr match BTHP loaded by Black Hills. Ron was partial to lever action rifles and he also had a Winchester model 9422 Legacy. His shotgun was a Remington model 870 12-gauge Express combo with a 28" barrel and the RemChoke and a 20" Improved Cylinder barrel. He had purchased an 8-shot aftermarket magazine extension for the shotgun.

Ammo wise he had a few bricks each of the CCI Mini-Mag and Stinger rounds. For the shotgun, he had an assortment of Federal 9-pellet 00 Tactical Buckshot and 1-ounce Hydra-Shok HP slugs. He also had an assortment of hunting shells, principally in the #2 and #6 shot.

He was particularly proud of his hunting knife. It was a Randall Made model 25 Trapper with a 6" blade. In addition to the hunting knife, he had a Gerber Multi-Plier 650 Evolution. He had 2 means of navigation, a Garmin GPSMAP 76CS and the MapSource Topo Software, both East and West. He also had a Silva Classic SILVA Ranger CL Compass for backup. And additionally, he had purchased the DeLorme Topo USA CD-

ROM and had spent considerable time printing out all of the maps. Did I mention that Ron was a bit of a survivalist? He had a 72-hour BOB built to FEMA specifications and one of those Glock E-Tools.

For food and water, Ron had a Camelbak Ranger Realtree pack. He kept some lifeboat rations and MRE's in the pack together with spare ammunition for his M1A. He had other things in that pack, including an assortment of other survival items like a fishing kit, etc., but I believe that you get the general idea. Ron kept the backpack in the trunk of his car, together with his complete gun collection and ammo in a gun safe. Anytime he had to, he could bugout. Not a bad idea for someone who lived in earthquake country. He also had some ALICE gear that he'd liberated from the Army.

It had started out as just another Saturday in Los Angeles. Ron was supposed to pick up Sandy and take her to the La Brea Tar Pits to work. She said to pick her up around 9am. When he got to the campus, Sandy was outside, engaged in an argument with a seedy looking fellow who Ron took to be Don. Just as Ron pulled up, Don doubled his fist and hit Sandy about as hard a blow as Ron had ever seen. Knocked her flat on her butt. Sandy tried to shake it off and Ron bolted to confront the guy. Before he could get there, Sandy came up with the .40 S&W Glock 23. About that time, 3-4 more guys boiled out of an old junker car; he wasn't sure how many, he was watching Sandy.

Don grabbed for his back pocket and when he came out with a revolver, Sandy shot him right dead center. And then, one of those buttholes who had gotten out of the car shot Sandy, center mass. She went down and Ron grabbed her gun. He got 2 of the guys and maybe wounded a 3rd. About that time an LAPD squad car pulled up and the cops boiled out of the car and told him to drop the gun.

"But, I haven't done anything wrong," he protested, tossing the Glock down.

"Who shot the girl?" one of the cops asked.

"Those guys over there that I shot," Ron replied.

"Who shot this guy?" one of them asked pointing to Don.

"She did, in self-defense, he went for a gun," Ron replied.

"Get an ambulance, she's still alive," one of the cops said examining Sandy.

"Cover him," the other cop said. He called for an LA City Paramedic Ambulance and then proceeded to cuff Ron.

"What's this all about?" Ron said, "I told you what happened."

"It's your word against nobody's as to what happened," one of the cops said. "You've admitted that you shot those two guys over there and this guy is dead and the girl is unconscious. And from what I can see, there aren't any witnesses."

"Sure there are," Ron said. "I wounded a 3rd man and he and another guy got away."

"Got away how?" one cop asked.

"In an old beater car," Ron said, "I didn't really get a good look at it, but it has primer spots all over it."

About that time an LA City Paramedic ambulance pulled up. One of the paramedics went to Sandy and said, "I've got a pulse."

"These other guys are all dead," the other paramedic said.

They got out their radio and hooked in with a hospital and after some conversation and establishing an IV, loaded Sandy on a gurney and put her in the ambulance.

"We're going to have to take you in for now until we can get this all sorted out," one of the cops said.

"Bull," Ron replied, "I'm going to the hospital to be with my girl."

"The hell you are, you're under arrest," one of the cops said.

"What for?" Ron asked.

"Suspicion of homicide for the moment," the office explained, "You admitted to shooting those two guys over there."

"They shot my girl," Ron protested, "I told you that."

"And I told you that's it's your word against nobody's at the moment," the cop said, pushing Ron toward the car.

Ron had been through an E & E course in the Army and had even taught the class for a while. What he should have done was just go along with the cops and see how everything worked out. But, it looked to him like Sandy was either dead or dying and by God, he hadn't done anything wrong and had no way to prove it. So, what he did instead was to slide his fingers into his rear jeans pocket and slide out a thin strip of metal, which he used to slip the cuffs. One little mistake. He threw an elbow into the first cop, knocking him out. Then he did some of that Kung Fu stuff they taught in the Army and took the other cop out.

Ron ran to his car and was out of there in a New York minute. He wasn't really thinking clearly and barreled down I-10 eastbound. He just about got away clean because the cops didn't know he had a car. But, one of them perked up enough to see him driving off and got the license plate. He had nowhere to run to and nowhere to hide. He drove and he drove and was about to San Bernardino when a CHP car spotted him and gave chase. Ron made his second mistake and used some of those E & E techniques he'd taught and lost the cop. By the time the CHP got a chopper up looking for him, Ron had made it up I-15 and taken the Silver Lake exit and headed east on 138.

About in the area of Forest Route 3N45, he ran out of gas. Ron had intended to get gas on the way to the Tar Pits, but had never gotten the chance. So, his girl was dead and he was charged with murder and he was stuck in the middle of nowhere with an empty gas tank. He got out of the car and into the trunk. He got out his pack and his ALICE gear and made sure all of the magazines for the rifle and pistol were full. He strapped the shotgun with the short barrel and magazine extension onto the pack and put on the pack and the ALICE gear. Then, he set off cross-country in the San Bernardino National Forest.

Ron went until he was totally lost. Then, he dropped to the ground and opened his pack. In the pack was a scanner and earplug and a table of police frequencies. Ron had picked the scanner up overseas and it didn't have any of the frequencies blocked. It was an AR8200 Mark III portable receiver with unparalleled frequency coverage from 500 KHz to 3 GHz. He had a memory card with a set of preprogrammed frequencies and started to monitor radio calls, including cell phones. Then he got out his GPS and his book of Southern CA Topo maps and pinpointed his location.

The Gordian Knot – Chapter 2 – Alexander and the Gordian Knot

In May 333 BC Alexander faced a crucial decision concerning his Persian conquests. Lacking reinforcements, his men ragged, and with Macedonia poverty stricken from funding his war effort, Alex waited near Gordium for inspiration from the gods. Upon resolving to continue his campaign, Alex was halted by his personal seer just before leaving the city. To depart without attempting the Gordian Knot would cause bad luck to befall his armies. Alexander had to attempt the puzzle.

Making his way to the Acropolis, Alexander was followed by a great crowd. Anxious, they gathered to see the great king struggle with their famed puzzle as all had before him. The townspeople were not disappointed. For nearly two hours Alex racked his brain for a solution. Finally, in a fit of frustration he asked of his advisors, "What does it matter how I loose it?" He drew his sword and, in a single spinning flourish, sliced the Gordian Knot open to reveal the ends hidden inside.

That night a wicked storm descended upon Gordium. Thunder raged and lightning crackled. Oracles and soothsayers gathered around. Alexander and the seers interpreted the storm as a sign that Zeus was pleased and would grant Alexander's armies victory. The next day Alexander left Gordium and conquered the world.

Alexander solved his puzzle by approaching it in a new way. He was innovative. He was a thinker and a strategist, deserving of victory. The oracle had foretold that he who "luein the knot" would conquer. True to form as oracles are today, the oracle's prediction was ambiguous. In ancient Greek, the word luein meant "loosen" and "untie" and "unfasten." It also meant "solve" and "resolve" and "break up" and "cut" and "sunder." Everybody chose to interpret the oracle in the most obvious manner. Everyone except Alexander. He alone questioned the rote of loosening a knot without ends. The rest is history.

Ron was facing his own challenge or Gordian knot as it were. Alexander was trying to get in; Ron was trying to get out. He hadn't done anything wrong until he decided to run. And, he'd only done that because Sandy was dead and he'd killed 2 men and couldn't prove that he hadn't shot Don or even Sandy. The cops would track down the guns and know some facts, but that still wouldn't prove who'd done what to whom. There were no doubt innocent men sitting on death row under similar circumstances. He could tell from the scanner that the police had found his car and were looking in that general area for him. He had come maybe 5-6 miles and wasn't in their immediate search area. He had some water and a lifeboat ration for energy and set off again to the east, away from the cops.

What he didn't know and couldn't know was that those 2 guys who had gotten away had gotten together with some 'friends' and were looking for him. He'd barely grazed the 3rd man, perhaps he'd just fired too quickly, but that man was hurting a little and more than a little angry. TV was covering the event breaking in from time to time with 'updates'. Basically what it boiled down to was that the cops were looking along highway 138 all

the way from Cajon Junction to Lake Arrowhead. And the hospital had no comment on Sandy's condition. One of the really strange things about it all was that gun store where he was Assistant Manager sold more guns to cops than anyone else. Ron had more friends than he knew.

One of them was a detective in Robbery-Homicide. While the detective didn't know Ron personally, he'd bought a couple of weapons from him and Ron had seemed like a nice enough guy. Nice guys kill people too and Ron had admitted to the patrolmen that he had shot the two dead men and wounded a third. The records showed that the Glock belonged to the female victim and further checking revealed that they had a dating relationship that went back over a year. Going through her apartment, they found the receipt for the BHGC and checked that lead out. They had a record of Sandy reserving range time dating back to the day she had taken delivery of the Glock. Every month thereafter, she had reserved additional range time. The instructor finally recalled that he was supposed to teach her how to use the Glock but that fella from the gun store had done it.

Sandy was in a coma and couldn't give the Robbery-Homicide detective any information to confirm what Ron had told the patrolmen. So, next the detective looked into Don's background and discovered that the day before he'd gotten killed he'd been released from jail. He had a long history of harassing Sandy and was under a Restraining Order. The other two decedents had long criminal records and one of them had been in jail with Don for part of Don's sentence. And, one of the two men had a car registered in his name. They put an APB/BOLO out on the car and a patrol car found it abandoned. There were bloodstains on the seat. Piece-by-piece the detective was beginning to confirm Ron's story, without any witnesses. Then someone, another detective, happened to mention that they were looking at so-and-so as part of an organized group and that so-and-so was known to run with the two dead guys. So-and-so, a guy named Rocky, had the same blood type that was found in the car, an old piece of trash with a lot of spots of that gray primer on it. Plus there was that purse and the extra magazines.

It took the detective about 6 days to put that all together and he took the information to his Lieutenant. The Lieutenant agreed that Ron was probably only guilty of bad judgment and assaulting two patrolmen. He booted it up to the Captain who took it to the DA who dropped all of the pending charges except assaulting police officers and evading the CHP. Those charges did not warrant the hundreds of thousands of dollars the man-hunt was costing and they called it off. Meanwhile, Ron had been able to move further east and was in the vicinity of Lake Arrowhead. He heard the radio calls that called off the search and decided that he'd better turn himself in and face the music. The principal reason given for calling off the search was that he was no longer wanted for suspicion of murder.

Ron hadn't had a lot of time to sort through all of the things he carried in the trunk of his car. The only things he'd ended up leaving behind were the 28" shotgun barrel and the hunting shells. Having considered carefully all of the things that might happen if he were forced, ever, to abandon the vehicle, he had fashioned scabbards for the 870 and the

9422. The scabbards attached to the pack and were lashed in place. Made of ballistic nylon, they weren't that heavy. He only had been able to take the ammo in the 870 plus 25 extra rounds of slugs and tactical buck. While he would have preferred a heavier load in both shells, this stuff had lowered recoil and slightly improved his recovery time increasing his rate of fire. Besides, they were lighter to carry and every ounce counted.

And finally, Sandy awoke. After a day, she was able to talk to the detective. She couldn't give him the full story, but it was enough. Sandy freely admitted that she had bought the Glock and extra magazines out of fear for her life. The LAPD had tried, but they couldn't protect her. That morning, she said, she was standing outside waiting for Ron to pick her up to go to work when Don and a car full of rough looking guys pulled up. Don, she said, confronted her and she'd told him she was seeing someone else and that marriage might be in the offing. Don had lost it and belted her, knocking her to the ground. She reached for her Glock to protect herself and drive him off and he came up with a revolver. She shot him before he could get her and then a few moments later she felt a crushing blow and that was all she could remember.

The detective explained that she'd broken two laws and that the Glock was forfeit. Whether or not she'd be prosecuted would be up to the DA. Sandy asked about Ron and the detective told her the story. He'd been able to piece most of it together and the DA had dropped the murder charges against Ron but he was still wanted for assaulting 2 police officers and evading the CHP. He figured that it would only be a matter of time before Ron heard and turned himself in, if he were any judge of character.

If Rocky, the guy Ron had wounded, had been a better shot, Sandy would have been dead. As it was, he was looking at attempted murder. The grazing wound had bled profusely but was now healing. The TV had announced that she was awake and expected to survive. Her mother had flown in from San Francisco and had hired a rent-a-cop to guard her hospital door in case those hard cases tried to finish Sandy off. Mom had done well when she'd remarried and her new husband was a man of considerable influence up north. He was wealthy, too and considering how much it cost per hour to employ armed rent-a-cops, this was a very good thing. All that had come about when LAPD had told her that 1) they didn't think it likely that Don's 'friends' would be back to harm Sandy; and, 2) they couldn't spare the manpower.

With the additional information, the detective went back to his Lieutenant and then the Captain and finally talked to the DA. The DA initially wanted to file charges but the detective talked him out of it. Sandy had been through enough, he insisted. She'd lost her gun and would be a long time healing and that was punishment enough. He'd pushed until the DA caved in and went along with his recommendation. Then, he went looking for the two patrolmen who had been assaulted, to have a talk with them.

Lake Arrowhead is heavily populated, especially during sporting seasons. There are water sports in the summer and skiing in the winter. Plus, a fair number of Angelinos choose to have a cabin in the area as a permanent retreat. Ron was planning on turning himself in there when he ran into trouble. He was about out of supplies when he heard

that the manhunt had been called off, anyway. He'd kept his CamelBak filled using a Katadyn Hiker filter. It only took about 144 pumps to refill his 3-liter water reservoir. He wasn't quite sure how to handle turning himself in, either. Looking for a patrol car and surrendering was probably as easy as anything. He cached all of his equipment, just in case something went wrong and slipped the .45 into his waistband. He was in Lake Arrowhead and spotted a patrol car when he also spotted Rocky and a bunch of toughs.

Rocky and his 'associates' were between Ron and the cops, so he slipped into a store to get out of sight. The store sold a variety of things for campers and Ron decided he'd better stock up while he had the chance. He bought additional fuel tabs for his Esbit folding camping stove and waterproof matches. He also bought an assortment of AlpineAire and Mountain House freeze-dried products, just in case it took him some time to get himself turned in. In his belt were 3 folded \$100 bills, strictly for emergencies. Well, if this wasn't an emergency, he sure didn't know what qualified. Ron took the 2 large paper bags of supplies and slipped out the back way. He made it back to his cache and reassembled his gear. He put the fuel tabs and matches in his pack and added some of the food.

"Look, over there," Rocky shouted. "That guy with the shopping bags, isn't that him?"

"Jeez, cool it Rocky," one of the others said, "The cops are right over there."

"Follow him," Rocky said, "I want a piece of him, that SOB that shot me."

The clerk in the store had included a newspaper from the previous day and after he'd repacked everything and moved to a safer location, Ron had sat down to catch up the news. SANDY WAS ALIVE! There wasn't much information, just a brief mention that the victim of the shooting on the UCLA campus, Sandra Marshall, was out of her coma and talking with authorities. There was the briefest mention that police were still looking for Ronald Hardwood for assaulting 2 police officers and evading the CHP.

Sandy's stepfather had talked to an attorney he knew in San Francisco. The lawyer had worked for the late Melvin Belli, the attorney who had defended Lee Harvey Oswald and had even been in a Star Trek episode. Belli had died in 1996 from cancer shortly after filing bankruptcy. His son, who was in the same Star Trek episode, was a personal injury attorney, not a criminal lawyer. The lawyer got right on the case and had a friendly talk with the detective. He knew that you got more flies with honey than vinegar and didn't bully the cop.

"I've had a talk with those 2 patrolmen," the detective said. "They understand Ron's situation but he did assault them."

"I'm not saying that Ron wasn't wrong," the lawyer replied. "He was under a lot of emotional stress at the moment, however. How do you think this will come out?"

“Well, if he turns himself in, I think the DA will accept a plea bargain for misdemeanor assault on the 2 police officers and misdemeanor evading,” the detective said. “He’d probably agree to a suspended sentence or probation. But, if he doesn’t turn himself in and we have to go after him, it could turn out a whole lot different.”

“I think that he went into the woods over there,” Rocky said.

“Why don’t we just forget it Rocky,” one of the guys suggested. “You’re ok and we could all end up dead. That guy seemed to be pretty handy with a gun. The TV said he was in the Army.”

“Shut up, asshole,” Rocky demanded. “I’m going to bury that SOB. Shake a leg before he gets too far ahead of us. I ain’t no Daniel Boone.”

Rocky and friends proceeded down the path that Ron had taken back into the woods. Ron hadn’t left any sign of his passing and they had no idea where he was. A ways up the trail, they spotted a scuffmark and presumed that this was where Ron had gotten off the trail. They spread out to look for him, making enough noise to wake the dead. They were off by about 100-yards and Ron heard them coming. He stuffed the paper into his pack and prepared to move out. It was awkward, at best, to carry the rifle and the paper shopping bag of freeze dried food, but he soon put some distance between the source of the noise and himself.

Ron found a nice place to hole up that was defensible on all sides, right near a small stream. He went to ground and prepared to defend himself against those toughs who he assumed had followed him into the woods. About an hour later, the 4 bad guys appeared in a clearing to his front. Ron hunkered down to avoid detection, but one of them must have seen him because they opened fire. One by one, he slowly took them on with the M1A, shooting 2 of the 4. The gunfire had not gone unnoticed in Lake Arrowhead however and the cops radioed for backup.

Lake Arrowhead is in San Bernardino County and before long scores of Deputy Sheriff’s and CHP officers were on the scene. The LA detective heard about the activity and hopped in his car and he and his partner headed for Lake Arrowhead. It was out of his jurisdiction, but maybe he could lend a hand and even get Ron to turn himself in. Even at Code 3, you can’t get to Lake Arrowhead quickly. By the time they arrived on scene, the area where Ron and the bad guys were was completely encircled. The detective talked with his counterparts with the SBSD and they agreed to allow him to try and talk Ron out. He grabbed a megaphone and got as close as he could to the scene of the trouble.

“Ron Hardwood, this is Sergeant Jim Smith of the LAPD,” the detective said into the hailer. “Give it up. We have the area surrounded and this isn’t going to end up good.”

“I was coming to Lake Arrowhead to turn myself in when I spotted those guys,” Ron shouted. “I picked up some supplies and headed back to the woods. How’s Sandy?”

“Sandy is recovering, Ron, turn yourself in,” Jim announced.

This is where our story started, with Ron being surrounded on 3 sides, 4 actually, by LEO’s and faced with 2 more bad guys.

“Get those guys off me and I’ll give up,” Ron shouted back.

“Sit tight,” Jim hailed him, “And stop shooting. We’ll get them and you can give it up.”

Ron thought about that for a minute or more and figured that if he didn’t quit, it could only get worse. He stripped off his ALICE gear and stuffed everything into the pack after removing the food. He looked around and found a place to hide all of his equipment and did just that. By the time he was finished, nobody would ever find it. He’d wrapped everything in plastic using garbage bags and sat there eating a power bar.

It didn’t take the LEO’s too long to arrest Rocky and the remaining bad guy and when they’d accomplished that, Jim called out on the hailer for Ron to show himself. Ron stood up and raised his hands. A couple of deputies rushed him, cuffed him and dragged him to a patrol car. By the time they got him booked into the San Bernardino County Jail, the attorney was waiting to talk with him.

“I talked briefly with the San Bernardino County DA and they haven’t decided what to do yet,” the lawyer said. “But as far as LA goes, they’ll still accept a plea bargain. You’ll have to plead guilty to two counts of misdemeanor assault and one of misdemeanor evading.”

“Sure, why not?” Ron replied. “How is Sandy?”

“She’s fine, Ron,” the lawyer said. “She should be getting out of the hospital soon. Her stepfather is paying for my services, by the way.”

“So, what’s my situation?” Ron asked.

“Well, it’s hard to say, but with those 2 bad guys in custody, that might help,” the lawyer explained.

“What about the 2 guys I shot?” Ron asked.

“They’re alive,” the lawyer said.

“They wouldn’t be if I could have gotten a clear shot,” Ron announced.

“Keep that to yourself, Ron,” the lawyer advised, “And I’ll do my best to make this all go away.”

“When can I see Sandy?” Ron asked.

“That won’t be for a while, Ron, let’s get this all straightened out and you can see her later,” the lawyer said rising to leave.

After the lawyer left, Jim Smith and his partner came to see Ron.

“How did you get yourself in this mess, kid?” Smith asked.

“I don’t know,” Ron admitted. “That Don belted Sandy and I ran to her aid. They both came up with guns and she shot first. Then one of those guys shot her and I grabbed her gun and shot 2 of them, killing them. I winged a 3rd. The patrolmen cuffed me and I made a bad call, is all. But, I thought that Sandy was dead and I was going to get charged with murder. The lawyer mentioned that you’ve done a lot to get this straightened out, I really appreciate that.”

“It isn’t like in the movies, Ron,” Smith said. “But under the circumstances, I think you’re going to get a break. We’ll have a talk with the San Bernardino County Deputies and see if they can drop charges. What did you do with your guns and equipment?”

“What guns and equipment?” Ron asked. “I was throwing rocks at those guys.”

“We can seize those guns if we find them,” Jim said.

“I know, but, you won’t find them,” Ron said.

“Even though you won’t have a felony conviction if this all works out,” Jim said, “You’ll never be able to possess a gun in California again.”

“I’ll probably lose my job, too,” Ron admitted.

“Probably,” Jim agreed. “What are you going to do when this is all over?”

“I think I’ll ask Sandy to marry me and move to Arizona,” Ron suggested.

San Bernardino County decided that Ron was acting in justifiable self-defense and decided not to press charges. The lawyer got Ron off with three years of probation in Los Angeles. Ron asked Sandy to marry him and they had a fancy wedding with her stepfather giving the bride away.

“What are you going to do now Ron?” Travis Dean, Sandy’s stepfather asked.

“I don’t know, Travis,” Ron admitted. “I lost my job and all I know is guns and survival. Sandy is transferring to the University of Arizona and I’ll be looking for a job.”

“Did you ever think of starting a training school?” Travis asked. “You were pretty handy evading the cops and the bad guys for quite a while. You could use some polish, but the state the world is in, you might do very well teaching others survival skills.”

“That sounds interesting, Travis, but I don’t have any money put away to start a school like that,” Ron said. “And the terms of my probation prohibit me from handling firearms.”

“You can hire someone to teach shooting, Ron,” Travis suggested. “And, I’ll front the money for the business and make you an employee until you’re off probation.”

“I’ll have to talk to Sandy about it,” Ron said, “But if she agrees, you have a deal.”

The Gordian Knot – Chapter 3 – The Business

This whole thing was going to be easier said than done. First, Travis got the lawyer to get the court to grant permission for Ron to serve his probation in Arizona. Next, he located a facility in Mesa and rented it for the business. He told Ron to be thinking about whom he was going to get to run the firearms instruction. Figuring to capitalize on the school, Travis put in a small retail store in the building and supplied it with all manner of equipment based on what Ron had in his backpack. He applied for a federal firearms license in the name of the business and arranged contracts with several gun distributors and Springfield Armory. He also bought a large piece of land out in the desert that included a variety of terrain.

“Sandy, I have no idea who to ask to run the firearms school,” Ron said.

“Did you ever think of asking Sergeant Smith with the LAPD?” she asked.

“No, not really,” he admitted.

“Look, I know he was just doing his job, but he was our Guardian Angel,” Sandy said. “It couldn’t hurt to have a talk with him. What do you think you’ll call the school?”

“Travis said that we should call it The Gordian Knot,” Ron replied. “I don’t know what that’s all about.”

“It’s about Alexander the Great and a problem he solved,” Sandy said, “Alexander solved his puzzle by approaching it in a new way. He was innovative. He was a thinker and a strategist, deserving of victory. I like the name. You should go on the Internet and read about it.”

“Hi, Sergeant Smith,” Ron said.

“Hi, Ron, I heard that you got probation, how are things going?” Smith replied.

“Sandy and I got married,” Ron said.

“Congratulations,” Jim said. “So did you find another job?”

“That’s why I’m here,” Ron replied. “Travis Dean, Sandy’s stepfather, is setting me up in business in Mesa.”

“What kind of business?” Jim asked.

“It’s going to be sort of a Survival School,” Ron said. “We’re going to teach living off the land and escape and evasion. Plus we’re going to teach firearms usage.”

“Whoa, wait a minute, Ron,” Jim said quickly, “You are under a court ordered prohibition of having anything to do with firearms until your probation is over.”

“Yeah, I know, Sergeant, that’s why I’m here,” Ron explained. “Travis said to find someone to run that part of the school and Sandy suggested you.”

“I am a NRA certified instructor, but I’m a detective,” Jim said. “Still, I have 27 years in with the department. Minimum retirement requirements are 20 years of service and minimum age of 50. I’ll be 50 next month and that would give me a 71% pension. How much would this job of yours pay?”

“You’d have to work that out with Travis, Sergeant Smith,” Ron said. “If you’re interested, here’s his number in San Francisco.”

“What are you going to call this school, Ron?” Jim asked.

“The Gordian Knot is the name Travis picked out,” Ron said.

“That somehow seems appropriate,” Jim chuckled. “That pretty much describes the situation you found yourself in a while back.”

“I don’t get it,” Ron said.

“Do you have a computer, Ron?” Jim asked.

“Yes,” Ron replied.

“Look it up on the Internet,” Smith suggested. “I’ll have a talk with the wife about the job. She’s wanted me to get out of the business for a long time anyway.”

Travis agreed to pay Jim Smith exactly what he was making with the LAPD. His wife, Rosemary, was completely in favor of him retiring and doing something safer. The land that Travis purchased had an old farmstead on it and Ron and Sandy moved into that house. She pretty much picked up where she left off on her Doctorate program and Ron started to get the warehouse fitted out with classrooms and an indoor training range where he could teach Urban Tactics. Jim Smith showed up a month later and they finished off setting up the store and the training range. Travis arranged through a publisher friend of his for a full-page newspaper ad and interview with the principals involved with the school.

Over the course of the first year, the business lost money because the salaries exceed the income. The second year, however, a bunch of terrorists flew jet airplanes into the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. That date was September 11, 2001. After that, the business slowly began to pick up and more and more people became interested in survival. And, Ron finished polishing his E & E skills with the help of an old Marine Recon Gunnery Sergeant who Travis had hired to work with him. The second year, The

Gordian Knot broke even and the 3rd year it showed a small profit. Ron finished his probation and was no longer restricted from handling firearms. You must remember that he'd only plead guilty to misdemeanors. Anyway, this was Arizona, not California.

Sandy finally finished her dissertation and earned a PhD. They decided to hold off having children until she finished a dig in Montana that would run a couple of years. Then, President Bush got the US involved in the Iraq Affair. After some initial success, that bogged down and I sure you know how that went. Ron had detoured on the way to Arizona up to Lake Arrowhead where he recovered his things. Sandy wasn't under any restrictions and she purchased him a replacement 26" barrel for the 870. He'd gotten his car back, but the LAPD or someone had taken the barrel and ammo for his shotgun. Sandy replaced her Glock 23 and secured Arizona, Utah and Florida CCW's after completing the course offered by Caswells.

"A.R.S. § 13.3112.T allows for the Arizona Department of Public Safety to enter into reciprocal agreements with states that have concealed weapons laws substantially similar to our laws. Therefore, the Concealed Weapon Permit Unit has determined that in order to meet the requirement of A.R.S. § 13.3112.T. Other states with a CCW programs must:

- Be a shall issue state
- Perform criminal history checks on all applicants
- Have standard disqualification, suspension & revocation requirements
- Have required training, which covers the following Deadly force issues
- Weapons care/maintenance
- Safe handling/storage
- Marksmanship
- Have a minimum age issuance of 21
- Require applicants be a US citizen or permanent resident alien
- Deny for mental illness
- Deny for misdemeanor domestic violence convictions
- Deny for felony convictions
- Have an expiration date on permit

After these items have been verified, the Arizona Concealed Weapon Permit Unit will forward a reciprocal agreement for consideration by the appropriate CCW unit for that state. These agreements are reviewed and amended by the both CCW units and legal sections, prior to being signed by the respective directors/heads of the agency having the mandated authority."

Ron also qualified for an Arizona CCW; Arizona, you see, was a 'shall' issue state. Ron wasn't on probation and he'd never been convicted of a felony. "A prohibited possessor includes a person found to constitute a danger to himself or others pursuant to a court order and whose court ordered treatment has not been terminated; who has been convicted of a felony involving violence or possession and use of a deadly weapon or dangerous instrument and whose civil rights have not been restored; who is at the time of

possession serving a term of imprisonment in any correctional or detention facility; who at the time of possession is serving a term of probation pursuant to a conviction for a domestic violence offense or a felony offense, parole, community supervision, work furlough, home arrest or release on any other basis or who is serving a term of probation or parole; or who was previously adjudicated delinquent and who possesses, uses or carries a firearm within ten years from the date of adjudication or release for an offense that if committed as an adult would constitute first or second degree burglary, arson, murder, manslaughter, kidnapping, robbery, aggravated assault, sexual assault or any felony offense involving the use or threatening exhibition of a deadly weapon or dangerous instrument.”

Nevertheless, Ron was a little reluctant to apply for a CCW in view of his misdemeanor criminal history. Jim contacted a fella he knew in the Arizona Department of Public Safety and they discussed Ron’s situation. The fella recommended that Ron hold off for a while with his application until he had a track record off probation. Jim applied for a position as a Reserve Deputy Sheriff with the Pinal County Sheriff and was accepted into the Sheriff’s Posse.

“In 2001, Sheriff Roger Vanderpool created a new Sheriff’s Posse which established for the first time in Pinal County an active, certified cadre of citizens upon whom the Sheriff could call to perform emergency response and law enforcement duties.

“This highly trained Posse is capable of performing such varied duties as criminal law and traffic law enforcement, evidence collection, crowd and traffic control at major events, training, air surveillance and wilderness search and rescue.

“New posse members are accepted into academy training or a specialty unit from a wide range of professional experience beginning with those who have had no prior law enforcement experience to those who are retired full-time law enforcement officers with twenty or more years of experience.”

Given the legitimacy of Jim being an active peace officer, Travis had the attorney process the paperwork to upgrade their federal firearms license to a class III dealer. In due course, the application was approved. And, in due course, Ron applied for a CCW and was approved. Having completed her dig in Montana, Sandy told Ron that it was time to start thinking about raising a family. Thus it came to be that in the spring of 2005, Sandy was expecting and Ron was now managing The Gordian Knot. Although it placed them in direct competition with Caswells, they built an indoor range. To avoid any animosity, however, use of their range was limited to students and graduates of their course.

And, getting the CCW had been a story in and of itself. Ron had applied early in 2004 and after much consideration Sheriff Vanderpool had turned him down. Later that year, Ed Albert, the older of the 2 LA patrolmen Ron had assaulted, had retired and applied for a job with The Gordian Knot. He’d been hired and had applied for and been accepted to Sheriff Vanderpool’s Posse. Jim and Ed had a long talk with Sheriff Vanderpool about what a fine young man Ron was and about all of the extenuating circumstances

relating to his assaulting 2 police officers. The Sheriff had finally issued the CCW in January of 2005.

Travis saw an opportunity to make more money out of the growing business. He bought that warehouse and the one adjacent to it. The second warehouse would be home to a construction business that included installing wind turbine generators, PV panels, solar water heating and carried a line of prefabricated shelters. In fact, he and Julia, Sandy's mother, were thinking of semi-retiring and moving to one of those senior communities in Mesa. They were going to keep their home in San Francisco and become Snow Birds, spending winters in Mesa and summers back home.

While Sandy had been off to Montana, Ron had a lot of free times on his hands. He rented a track hoe and dug a big hole in the ground. Into the hole went a prefabricated shelter that he'd gotten from Utah Shelter Systems. It was 10'x50' in size. Sandy, it should be noted, was reasonably well off because her father had a large insurance policy for her education and another for her mother. When he died, she'd received a large settlement and had left it invested with the insurance company. The insurance company had outperformed the market and she didn't know where she could do any better. Once she'd started Grad school, her financial demands had been even smaller because she was a teaching assistant.

As an Assistant Professor, she was earning pretty good money from the University of Arizona. This enabled Ron to put in the large shelter and fully equip it. He'd gotten a local welder to do the welding required and by the time Sandy was back from Montana permanently, they had a well-equipped shelter with 12-volt electrical systems and solar panels. Perhaps it was this shelter that had persuaded Travis to set up the second business. They dug a well near the shelter and put in a septic field to take advantage of the hand-powered pump the shelter incorporated.

"What do you want?" Jim asked, "A girl or a boy?"

"I don't care, Jim, as long as the baby is healthy," Ron answered. "We might get one the first time and the other the second."

"Thinking of having a large family?" Jim asked.

"Not more than 3 children," Ron replied. "Say I think that this idea that Travis had is going to work out well. He's gotten a contract with Storm and Tornado Shelters of Texas, and another with American Safe Rooms in Oregon. Plus, we'll be selling the recalibrated Survey Meters put out by KI4U, Inc. But, we need to add a line of food, what do you think about AlpineAire and Mountain House products?"

"Those Inferno self-heating meals aren't too bad," Jim said. "And Mountain House has that Mountain Oven. But I suppose that we'd better stock both and some of those Mountain House Just In Case Units. What did you use back when you were on the run?"

"I started out with lifeboat rations and MRE's," Ron said. "Then, when I bought the food in Lake Arrowhead, I got an assortment of the AlpineAire and Mountain House products."

"Did you ever recover your equipment?" Jim asked.

"Never laid my hands on it, Jim," Ron replied, "But, I showed Sandy where I put it and she got it, yes."

"What did you have anyway?" Jim asked.

"An M1A Super Match, a SA TRP .45ACP, a 12-gauge 870 and a 9422," Ron answered.

"Tactical ammo for the shotgun?" Jim asked.

"Yeah, but I'd have preferred the 3" stuff," Ron replied. "The thing was, weight was a problem and we only sold the Tactical buck in the store."

"I'll bet you're glad that that's all behind you, huh?" Jim asked.

"I am, Jim," Ron said. "I was trained to deal with stress situations but you never really know how you're going to react until the fat is in the fire. And I suppose that I sort of lost my cool when that guy hit Sandy. Then those other people shot her and I went ballistic."

"That was a pretty good elbow you threw into me," Ed laughed. "Did the Army teach you that?"

"No, but they taught me the stuff I used on your partner, Ed," Ron admitted. "He was reaching for his model 92 and I couldn't chance him reaching it."

"I'll bet it will be a while before you punch another cop," Ed said.

"Probably not until next lifetime, unless he gets between my wife and me" Ron agreed. "If that happens, all bets are off."

"Bush says he's pulling out of Iraq," Jim said.

"It's about time," Ed offered. "But, it's been good for business."

"How about we put together some survival packs like the one I had," Ron asked. "It was based on a 3-liter CamelBak Ranger Realtree pack."

"Are we going to carry MRE's?" Ed asked.

“That depends on what Travis gets worked out with Wornick, Sopakco, Inc. and Crown Point,” Ron said. “They are the big suppliers.”

“What about Richmoor Brand products?” Jim asked, “They aren’t too bad.”

“We might as well carry a variety,” Ron said. “I’ll mention it to Travis. There is a lot of competition out there. You can get anything you want at The Alternative Energy Store.”

“I think all of this preparedness training is great,” Ed said, “But I surely do hope that we don’t have to put it to the test.”

“That makes two of us, Ed,” Ron agreed, “Especially since I’m about to become a father for the first time. I had to use the training once and once was enough for me. And, it wasn’t simple either. You don’t know if the cops are going to be your friends or the enemy if TSHTF. I assumed the former the last time and it worked out ok. But if someone were to attack this country, big time I mean, how would the LEO’s react?”

“They’d react according to their training Ron, just like you did,” Jim said. “The biggest problem they’d have would be sorting out who was a good guy and who was a bad guy. If TSHTF, that might be pretty hard to tell.”

“You didn’t seem to have any trouble when it came to me,” Ron said.

“Only because I knew who you were and what your background was,” Jim said. “Plus you didn’t do any more than react in a predictable fashion. If you had done anything that went over the limit, you’d still be sitting in jail. People have to understand that they can’t take the law into their own hands. As it was, partner, you pushed the limits.”

“What would you have done if my partner had reached his pistol?” Ed asked.

“I wouldn’t have killed him if that’s what you’re asking,” Ron said. “I wouldn’t have crossed that line, no matter what. I could have stayed and fought the CHP, but I chose to evade and escape, hoping that somehow everything would work out.”

“It’s a thin line, Ron,” Ed said. “You said yourself not 10 minutes ago that and I quote, ‘he gets between my wife and me’ you might react differently. All I’m trying to point out is that we’re all capable of some extreme behavior in extreme situations.”

“With luck, I’ll never have to find out,” Ron said, “But you’re right, Ed, extreme situations call for extreme measures.”

The Gordian Knot – Chapter 4 – The Summer of 2005

George W. Bush was only 6 months into his second term when the terrorists decided to test his resolve. After the January election in Iraq, the UN finally began replacing the US troops and Bush had everyone home by June. There were no more troops in either Afghanistan or Iraq. Bush was claiming a great victory. Colin Powell, on the other hand, would only say, 'We'll see'. The Senate had confirmed all of Bush's appointments, but one, after a fairly stiff bit of resistance put up by the Democrat party. That one appointment that was being held up was the appointment of Condi Rice as Secretary of State. Because Powell's resignation only took effect when the Senate approved a successor, Colin was still Secretary of State. Then the Chief Justice died and Bush nominated a person that some thought too conservative to sit on the high bench. There was one hell of a fight going on in the Senate over that appointment. And, the Republicans that opposed Condi supported the Supreme Court nominee. Sandy had just had her baby, a girl they named Maria. Travis was in Mesa on business and Julia was out at the ranch ogling her new granddaughter.

"We've got trouble, Jim said, "They just pushed the Threat Level to Red."

"Where's Travis?" Ron asked.

"Over in the other warehouse," Ed answered.

"I don't know about the two of you, but, I'm getting Travis and heading to the ranch," Ron said. "How many of those MP5's do we have?"

"Six," Jim replied.

"If Rosemary and you come to the ranch, bring them," Ron said. "In fact, clean out the gun case and get all of the ammo. If TSHTF, I don't want to go up against our own weapons."

"Do you have room for the wife and me?" Ed asked.

"That shelter is rated at 50 people Ed, so load up a truckload of food, grab the wife and come on down," Ron said. "In fact have everyone who works here get all of the food and supplies they can carry and bring their families."

"Sure," Ed said, "I tell everyone. Do you want us to bring everything?"

"No, that would take too long; food, guns, ammo and survival gear only," Ron said. "I'll see all of you at my ranch."

Ron bolted out the door to get Travis. Ed directed the employees, there were only 7, including the Gunny, but excluding them, to grab all of the food and survival gear they could carry, get their families and head to Ron's ranch. Ron found Travis and quickly

explained what was going down. Then, while they were in the truck headed south towards the ranch, called Sandy and told her that the Threat Level was Red and that she'd better get herself, Maria and Julia to the shelter. Travis was with him, he said, and they'd be there in about 15 minutes.

"Stop by a Circle K and get all of the disposable diapers they have," Sandy directed.

"Ok, make that 20 minutes, honey, but you go ahead and get in the shelter," Ron agreed. "Everyone who works at The Gordian Knot is headed there so be careful whom you shoot."

"Are you overreacting to this Threat Level Red?" Travis asked.

"Maybe, but better safe than sorry, Travis," Ron said, "They've never gone to Red before that I can remember."

"What's the nature of the threat?" Travis asked.

"I don't know, Travis," Ron replied, "You stay with the truck while I get the diapers. There's a gun in the glove box if you have trouble."

Ron grabbed every package of disposable diapers the store had, regardless of size. The clerk said that they had more in the back room if he wanted them. Ron told him that he'd take them and to ring everything up real quick. He paid, they loaded and he grabbed a tarp from behind the seat and covered the load, losing about 5 minutes in the process. Then he headed south to the ranch on East Hunt Highway, a ways down from Pegasus Airpark but before you got to East Arizona Farms Road. The Ranch butted right up against the Gila River Res. By the time Travis and Ron got to the ranch, people were starting to arrive. It was taking people with kids in school longer because they had to find their kids before they could come. From the time that Jim had sounded the alarm until everyone was assembled took a little over an hour.

A Severe Condition reflects a severe risk of terrorist attacks. Under most circumstances, the Protective Measures for a Severe Condition are not intended to be sustained for substantial periods of time. In addition to the Protective Measures in the previous Threat Conditions, Federal departments and agencies also should consider the following general measures in addition to the agency-specific Protective Measures that they will develop and implement:

- Increasing or redirecting personnel to address critical emergency needs;
- Assigning emergency response personnel and pre-positioning and mobilizing specially trained teams or resources;
- Monitoring, redirecting, or constraining transportation systems; and
- Closing public and government facilities.

But, I guess you could claim that Ron had overreacted, there hadn't been any atomic explosions (yet). Since the shelter was nothing but a big 10' pipe, it wasn't necessarily the most comfortable place to be. Ron told the people in the shelter that they could come out until something happened. Meanwhile, all of the men continued to move the supplies to the shelter. The ladies all assembled in the house and turned on TV. They concluded that there must be something serious going on, Dubya and Laura were getting on Marine One and bugging out. And more helicopters landed and evacuated more of the White House Staff.

Being a SA dealer meant that the store had quite an inventory of the M1A rifles and SA .45's. Jim had brought all of those in addition to their class III firearms. They didn't really have a large inventory of the latter because they didn't have a contract to supply any of the law enforcement agencies in the area. Their inventory was limited to a half dozen MP5's, some suppressors and some flare/teargas guns and cartridges.

While they eventually wanted to compete with other LEO only dealers, companies like Kiesler made that nearly impossible. Kiesler probably had millions of dollars in inventory, while they had only several thousands of dollars of inventory in the firearm category. On the other hand, they had tons of survival supplies, having been building their inventory since the business had opened.

Ron was just about to conclude that his actions were premature when the TV lost the picture. FOX News came back up in a few moments as they cut from the Washington, DC feed to a feed from New York. For a minute or two, they apologized, citing technical problems and then came the dreaded words. 'A small nuclear device had exploded in the vicinity of the US Capitol building'. They didn't have many facts and were stumbling around with several commentators expressing opinions about what it meant when they broke in to announce that a second nuclear device, this one much larger, had exploded in San Pedro Harbor, otherwise known as the Port of Los Angeles.

Ron realized that if these were the only 2 nuclear devices exploded, they had time to return to Mesa and pick up the supplies that they couldn't transport the first time out. They waited for about an hour before determining that only those 2 devices had been exploded. [Your author lives in Palmdale, CA and whatever happens in Palmdale, CA weather-wise takes about 24-hours to get to the Phoenix area. So, what's the distance from Palmdale to San Pedro? Two hours in rush hour traffic and an hour at other times, maybe a little more.] Ron sent everyone back to the store to pick up the remainder of the supplies. They grabbed the entire stock of Survey Meters and dosimeters since they would no doubt be needed. They also loaded the remaining ammo and survival supplies.

They had just gotten a shipment from Mountain House earlier in the morning and it was still on pallets on the semi that had made the delivery. They couldn't find the driver and wherever he had gone, he'd taken the keys with him. A little hot wiring, courtesy of that E & E course taught by the Army saw the semi running and headed down to the ranch. It didn't really take all that long to clean out the store and the old warehouse; it was

mostly training areas anyway. They were back in less than 2 hours and what food wouldn't fit into the shelter was soon to be buried.

The TV announced, eventually, that it appeared that everyone in the Capitol building area was dead or dying. But that wasn't the shocker, which was reserved for coverage of the crash of Marine One. It just was not quite far enough out to avoid the blast wave and had crashed, apparently with no survivors. Cheney was dead as was the Speaker of the House and the President pro Tempore of the Senate. Under the Succession Act of 1947, the Secretary of State was next in line of succession. Powell had been in New York addressing the UN and was sworn in later that day as President.

Powell's parents, Luther and Maud Powell, were Jamaican immigrants who lived in the South Bronx. After attending the New York City public schools, Powell enrolled in the City College of New York (CCNY), where he earned a bachelor's degree in geology and participated in ROTC. After graduating in 1958, he became an Army second lieutenant. He later earned an MBA from George Washington University in Washington, DC. He served 35 years in the military, and became a 4-star general. From 1989 to 1993, Powell served as chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the nation's highest military position, reporting to the president. He was in command during the 1991 Persian Gulf War. After retiring he wrote his autobiography, *My American Journey*. In 1997 he established *America's Promise – The Alliance for Youth*, a nonprofit organization to help needy and at-risk children. After being unanimously confirmed by the Senate, he was sworn in as the 65th Secretary of State on January 20, 2001. Powell is married to the former Alma Vivian Johnson of Birmingham, Alabama. They have one son, two daughters, and two grandsons. It looked like the terrorists had outfoxed Alma Powell who had steadfastly opposed Colin becoming President.

Colin Powell's 13 Rules of Leadership:

1. It ain't as bad as you think.
2. Get mad, then get over it.
3. Avoid having your ego so close to your position that when your position falls, your ego goes with it.
4. It can be done.
5. Be careful what you choose. You may get it.
6. Don't let adverse facts stand in the way of a good decision.
7. You can't make someone else's choices.
8. Check small things.
9. Share credit.
10. Remain calm. Be kind.
11. Have a vision.
12. Don't take counsel of your fears or naysayers.
13. Perpetual optimism is a force multiplier.

Given his military background, Powell was quick to act with respect to the immediate problem, radioactive fallout traveling east from Los Angeles. He ordered the immediate

evacuation of the cities in the path of that fallout and the Palo Verde Reactor shut down. Rob and some of the others had located a backhoe and worked feverishly to bury the remaining food supplies. They could only dig down so far with the backhoe they'd found and after stacking the supplies in the hole and covering them over with tarps, back filled. The supplies had about 8' of loosely packed soil over them. Once that project was well underway, some of the men made their way back to Mesa and fairly cleaned out some grocery wholesalers of paper products.

They worked through the night setting up the solar panels to recharge the batteries and by the next morning, when the low-level Geiger counter began to click more rapidly, everyone was hustled into the shelter and it was buttoned up. About the only change that Ron had made to the shelter as originally equipped was to replace the hand pump for the septic system with a 12-volt electrical powered sewage pump. He'd added a few things, but changed little.

In the 1950s and 1960s, the US developed lightweight nuclear devices to use in the interest of US national security. The Special Atomic Demolition Munition (SADM) was a Navy and Marines project that was demonstrated as feasible in the mid-to-late 1960s, but was never used. The project, which involved a small nuclear weapon, was designed to allow one individual to parachute from any type of aircraft carrying the weapon package that would be placed in a harbor or other strategic location that could be accessed from the sea. Another parachutist without a weapon package would follow the first parachutist to provide support as needed. The two-man team would place the weapon package in an acceptable location, set the timer, and swim out into the ocean where they would be retrieved by a submarine or other high-speed water craft. The parachute jumps and the retrieval procedures were practiced extensively. While the procedures were practiced extensively, SADM (W54) was never used. These types of weapons were no longer in the stockpile.

"Lebed told us while still operating in his capacity as Secretary of the Russian Security Council, he had conducted a study of the Russian military accounting for its nuclear weapons, specifically suitcase-sized nuclear devices, and had found that the military had lost track of approximately 84 suitcase-sized nuclear bombs, any one of which could kill up to 100,000 people with a capacity of 1 kiloton.

"In the US television interview subsequent to that meeting, aired on September 7, General Lebed said he now believes the number of missing nuclear weapons to be more than 100. He said the devices were the perfect terrorist weapon, as the small nuclear bombs were made to look like suitcases and could be detonated by one person with less than 30 minutes preparation.

"Now, Lebed's allegations have been vehemently denied by the Russian Government. In fact, I met with Kokoshin, the Deputy Defense Minister the day after our meeting with General Lebed, and he denied emphatically that General Lebed knew of what he was talking about. I also met that same day with General Manilov, who is No. 2 in the command staff.

“Moscow has even asserted in more recent days, and I have copies of these articles that I will enter into the record, that nuclear weapons of this type described by Lebed never existed, an erroneous claim that does not help the credibility of Moscow’s denials.”

There was one less missing Russian suitcase nuke and one less missing Russian or Pakistani or somebody’s hydrogen bomb. The bomb detonated in the Port of Los Angeles was very large. No one had any idea how large, but large. The largest bomb ever tested had been a 100MT device test by the Soviet Union that had only yielded 50MT (tested 11/30/61). The Soviet Union had actually tested several nuclear weapons in the > 10MT range with 3, excluded that 50MT device, having yield \geq 20MT. Those tests occurred in 1961 and 1962. And, the Soviets actually stockpiled some of those 50MT bombs for a while. The Soviet Union didn’t even keep track of its nuclear inventory on a computer, relying instead on paper and pencil.

It was most fortunate that they were selling the KI4U Survey Meters and dosimeters. It allowed them to equip all of the people in that shelter with the dosimeters. While rated at 50 people, that shelter wasn’t comfortable for more than about 30. There were 11 pairs of adults and 27 children ranging in age from an infant, Maria, to a high school senior. Supplies weren’t the problem, far from it. Cabin fever was the problem and as the time passed it built, almost to the point of an explosion. And finally, following the 7/10 rule, they opened the hatch to the outside. The survey meter didn’t register and they switched from a high capacity (0-500R) unit, a CD V-715, to a low capacity (0-50mR) unit, a CD V-700. They also began taking IOSAT (KI) when they left the shelter.

While the V-715 didn’t register, the V-700 did, but only a nominal amount of radiation was present, so radiation wasn’t the big problem. President Powell was safely tucked away at Mt. Weather. It was all rather surreal; other than a fine coating of decayed fallout, everything appeared normal except for the silence. The silence was deafening and it was only after a few moments that you realized what was wrong. Then, when one looked to the sky there weren’t any contrails.

TV hadn’t gone down as one might have expected and by this time they were well informed of what condition the country was in. Thank God for satellite TV and inverters. Only DC and the Port of Los Angeles had been hit. The Port of Los Angeles is (was) America’s busiest port with record volumes of cargo moving through the 7500-acre harbor. Its strong performance is (was) attributed to a solid US economy and the recovering Asian economies with a renewed manufacturing demand for American exports. During a recent year (2003) it had handled 3,890,324 inbound containers and 3,288,615 outbound containers.

The small strike in DC had neatly decapitated the government. Some members of the House of Representatives were away from Washington and were spared. But, with a major debate occurring in the Senate, all 100 Senators were in the chamber. And Marine One had been swatted from the air by the blast wave, as had the other choppers

carrying White House staff. The physical damage to the nation's Capital belied the impact on the American Government. Up in New York, the UN was already discussing bringing some blue hats to the US to help the Americans recover.

Colin Powell wasn't the Secretary of State anymore and he fell back on his military career for guidance. He sent a message to the UN thanking them for their concern and flatly told them that anyone turning up on US soil wearing a blue hat was, in effect, open game. The US fleet and military was intact, he reminded them, and they could deal with the problems adequately and expediently.

With weapons and Survey Meters in hand, the men set off to survey the condition of greater Phoenix. There was little physical damage to the city as far as they could see. Neither were there any yapping dogs or birds in the air. A few buildings had burned down, probably forgotten stoves or gas heated French fryers. The same could be said for a few homes. The government hadn't brought Palo Verde back on line and the absence of electricity was glaring. While Ron had a little Ham equipment in the shelter, he hadn't acquired portable radios. The Gordian Knot had a business band radio setup so they went by the business and got those radios. Then, they made a side trip to the business that had supplied the radios and freely helped themselves to whatever equipment they felt they needed. Everything they took was carefully listed and Ron left the list with instructions to bill The Gordian Knot.

It only made sense to stay close to the ranch until everything was sorted out. With the programmable handheld radios (CP200) and the device to program them, they had communications. They also had those 45-watt radios (CM-300) for the vehicles. It took most of the men the better part of a day to take down the antenna tower from The Gordian Knot and move it to the ranch. They hastily dug a hole and filled it with mixed Sackrete so they could erect the tower when the concrete setup.

As best they could tell from the conflicting news reports, someone had picked up some unaccounted for radiation in DC and a NEST team had been brought in to locate and disarm the device, were it explosive. They found the device and had started to either move or disarm it when the timer hit zero. News of the search and the move to Red had occurred all in a span of minutes. While the White House had been able to respond immediately, there was no immediate explanation for why the House and Senate had not. And, there was no one alive to ask. And since the US Supreme Court sat just to the east of the Capitol building Powell now had 9 empty chairs to fill. Which was the least of his worries, given that there was no Senate to confirm the appointments.

CNN or FOX had aired a report that suggested that the device in San Pedro was perhaps a stolen 2.1 mT Russian warhead. You had to assume that since the government had released figures estimating the weapon as having a 2 MT yield; someone had gone to their files and looked until they found a weapon of approximately that size and turned speculation into fact. You know how they do that right? They say something like the only known weapon of that size is the Russian XYZ warhead and blah, blah, blah. By the 3rd time it's rebroadcast, it's no longer speculation, but established fact.

“We came through that ok,” Jim observed.

“No one is hurt and we’re taking the IOSAT, so none of us should have any problems from any residual radiation. I want to get back in town sometime today and have another look around,” Ron said. “Once we get that tower erected, I’m thinking that we could mount the Ham antennas higher and maybe add some police band antennas. We’ll need the appropriate radios, too.”

“Best shot on the police radios would be the Phoenix PD,” Jim suggested. “Since Ed and I are Pinal County Posse members, we’ll take care of that.” (Phoenix is in Maricopa County.)

“I’d like to locate some fuel and some pickups, too,” Ron added. “I’ll have a quick visit with Travis and see what we can do.”

“Things should get back to normal as soon as everyone returns to Phoenix,” Ed jumped in, “Why bother?”

“When will the people be back, Ed?” Ron asked.

“How would I know?” Ed retorted.

“My point exactly. I’ll go by HRO in Phoenix,” Ron said, “Not that they ever have a lot in stock, but I can get some things. When you get the police radios, make it a baker’s dozen of the mobile units and antennas. I’ll get a power supply at HRO. And look for a base station antenna.”

“Travis,” Ron said. “We have quite a collection of cars here but only a couple of us have pickups. Depending upon how long it takes for everything to get back to normal, I think it might be a good idea to acquire some diesel pickups and some fuel.”

“Makes sense, Ron, what did you have in mind?” Travis said.

“Going to a lot and picking out some diesel vehicles and an assortment of spare parts,” Ron explained. “We can list the vehicles like we did with the radio equipment and tell them to bill The Gordian Knot when they get back. Then, with any kind of luck, we might be able to find a fuel tanker with a load of diesel.”

“You’re talking about a half million dollars’ worth of vehicles there, but I suppose it’s necessary so go ahead,” Travis said.

There must be more car and truck dealers in the greater Phoenix area than in Los Angeles. Finding vehicles wasn’t going to be a problem. And some of the wives or teen-aged kids could come along and drive the cars back to the ranch. Ron sat down and made a list of things they ought to get in terms of spare parts and accessories. He listed

bed liners, toolboxes, winches, spare bulbs, alternators, computers and batteries. Plus tires, filters, oil, PRI-D, spare fuses, etc. The vehicles should all be the same brand and model diesel pickup with 4WD, long beds, auxiliary fuel tanks and club cabs.

They got everything organized and enough people to bring back an even dozen new pickups. He hit HRO and picked up a spool of RG-213/U, connectors, a receiver, a Yaesu 1000 transceiver and several dual band, 2-meter/70cm transceivers. He added antennas and power supplies to the mix and left an inventory of what he'd taken with the now customary note to bill The Gordian Knot. It took most of the night and all of the next day to get all of the comm gear installed in the new pickups. Each vehicle had a CB radio, a police radio, a dual band, and a business radio. They bolted the toolboxes in place and put a bag of spare parts plus one of those CamelBak-based packs in each together with spare 7.62x51mm and/or 5.56 and .45 ammo.

While they were installing the equipment, Ron and Jim went looking for a fuel tanker. They found one at a Chevron station and the driver had apparently just pulled in to drop his load when the evacuation order came. Ron did some of that E & E stuff to the ignition and Jim followed the tanker back to the ranch. That evening, they held a meeting.

"Well, folks," Ron started, "We have communications, food, water, transportation and weapons. But it's starting to get pretty hot outside. There is no way we can all fit in the ranch house. It seems to me that we have some choices to make. Everyone can take some food and fuel and return to their home or we can add housing here at the ranch. I'd like to hear what everyone has to say on the subject."

"I'll start this off," Jim said. "Rosemary and I have a nice home in Mesa, but we'd be all alone up there. I'm not so sure that I want to go back to Mesa. If Rosemary agrees with me (she nodded) I'm thinking we'll find us a mobile home at one of those dealers in town and drag it down here."

"I'll go along with that," Ed said, "Subject to the wife's approval. There is safety in numbers and I'd bet the first people back in Phoenix will be looters."

The discussion continued for maybe an hour and in the end, everyone agreed that they might be better off on the ranch until things got back to normal, whenever that would turn out to be.

"We have some of that wind turbine equipment and those solar panels at the new warehouse," Travis pointed out. "It might be good advertising if we brought some of it down here and installed it. It would give us power and we could use it as a demonstration site, later. I do have one question. We only have 11 families here, why are we doing everything by the dozen?"

"I don't know if everyone got out, Travis," Ron replied. "I just figured that it wouldn't hurt to have one spare of everything."

“You’d better make that an even dozen trailers,” Travis suggested. “I know that a couple of the wives are nurses and we can set up the extra trailer as a medical clinic.”

“If we’re going to have a medical clinic, we’re going to need a lot more medical supplies than we have and some place to store everything,” Jim threw in.

“Then, we’ll find one of those steel buildings,” Travis suggested. “We can dig up those supplies we buried and put them in it. Plus anything else we salvage from town.”

“With that many trailers, we’re going to need a septic system,” Ed suggested. “Is that well of yours big enough to handle this many families?”

“The well’s no problem and we can find septic tanks and stuff for the drain field in town,” Ron said. “We will have to get 2 of those steel buildings, however because we’re going to need one to hold the gel cells, inverters and control equipment for the wind turbines.”

“We should go by one of the hospitals and pick up a portable X-Ray and medical supplies,” one of the nurses suggested. “And I’m going to need a list of everyone’s’ prescriptions so we are sure to meet their needs.”

Over the course of the next few days, they located and transported a dozen trailers, a trencher, septic tanks, drain field piping, gravel, a portable X-Ray machine and medical supplies including drugs. They found a water tank and a pump to supply water pressure. They transported in wind turbines, solar panels and gel cells from their warehouse. They found a steel building distributor in the Yellow Pages and liberated 3 steel buildings. They also got a ready mix truck and transported in enough concrete to pour slabs for the buildings. And, although they got a dozen trailers, they poured a third slab and set the medical clinic up in the third steel building.

And still, no one was returning to Phoenix.

The Gordian Knot – Chapter 5 – Where Have All The People Gone?

You should feel free to hum, *Where have all the flowers gone* when you address that question. It was really very simple, when you had the correct information. Powell had sent people in to fire up Palo Verde before returning the people to Arizona. There was some kind of a problem and they couldn't get the reactor back online. The only other major source of power was that coal burning plant in Holbrook and they had some kind of a problem, too. So rather than send people into stifling conditions, the temperature was high and rising, President Powell ordered the military to set up roadblocks at every road leading into Arizona.

"How many of those shelters did we sell?" Travis asked.

"Close to a dozen, Travis, but we hadn't installed any of them yet," Jim said. "They hadn't come in from the manufacturers."

"They assured me that they'd ship within a week," Travis grouched.

"So, give 'em a call and complain," Jim said. "But there is no one here to deliver them to, so I don't see any need to hurry."

"I just caught a broadcast on FOX News," Ed added. "Powell has essentially quarantined Arizona until they can get power restored. There's some kind of problem with both Palo Verde and that plant up in Holbrook."

"That's not going to keep the looters out," Jim opined. "They go around those roadblocks cross country and have themselves a field day."

"There aren't enough of us to make any difference," Ron said. "Besides, Ed and you are the only law in the whole damned state."

"If that's the case, I guess it makes us the highest ranking peace officers in Arizona," Jim laughed. "Ok, raise your right hands, you're all Deputies."

"Is that legal?" Travis asked.

"I think that most every Sheriff in Arizona has at least one or more permanent Posses," Jim said. "I don't see why Ed and I as the ranking LEO's in the area can't form our own. Ed can run down to Florence and pick up some badges from the Sheriff's office. When the regular authorities show up, we can disband."

"Sure, why not," Ron said. "Go ahead, Ed, but you'd better take someone with you, just in case there's someone down in Florence."

"I'll go with him," Gunny said.

“Ok Gunny,” Ron agreed. “Is there something wrong Gunny? You haven’t said a word since the trouble began.”

“If I ain’t got nothing to say,” Gunny gruffly replied, “I don’t open my yap. But I’ll tell you one thing, just because we ain’t seen no people don’t mean they ain’t out there. You best think about mounting a guard. Or, don’t they teach that in the Army? I doubt all of those Pima or Maricopa Indians left.”

“Why don’t you stay here and organize a guard detail Gunny?” Ron asked. “Someone else can go with Ed.”

“Nah, you do it, boss man,” Gunny half chuckled, “And when I get back, I’ll fix it right.”

Ed and Gunny got their gear and headed to Florence. After they left, Travis approached Ron.

“He might be right, you know,” Travis said. “Does he always act like that these days?”

“Gunny?” Ron smiled. “He’s crusty and then some. Man knows his business; I’ll give him that. Where did you ever come up with him?”

“Served with him in ‘Nam,” Travis said.

“You never said anything about being in the service,” Ron reacted more than a little surprised.

“You never asked,” Travis said. “I was a rifleman; Fox Company, 2nd Battalion, 7th Regiment, 1st Marine Division. So was Gunny except he wasn’t a Gunnery Sergeant back then.”

“Maybe you’d better organize the guard detail,” Ron suggested.

“No, Ron, and don’t worry about Gunny, he knows that you know your business or he would have said something to me,” Travis dismissed him.

In truth, there wasn’t much to organize. There were only 11 families and the ranch butt-ed up against the Gila River Indian Reservation. If there were any people still on the Res, they were probably friendly. And, you could see the road from the ranch house so maybe they only needed one person on duty all the time. Ron roughed out a schedule that only excluded Travis, the women and the kids, leaving 10 of them to cover the entrance. When Ed and Gunny got back a few hours later, he handed the list to Gunny to review.

“That will work, are you sure you weren’t a Marine?” Gunny crabbed.

“I talked to Travis,” Ron said, “You never told me you knew him.”

“Don’t believe anything he tells you boss man,” Gunny said. “Travis is a darned liar. I didn’t do half the stuff he claims I did.”

“Whatever you say Gunny,” Ron smirked.

“Have you been keeping track of everything we’ve requisitioned?” Travis asked later.

“I have a carbon copy of each list of the items we took,” Ron said. “We always left the original of the list and a note telling them to bill The Gordian Knot. Right now, with the trucks, trailers and all the other stuff we’ve ‘borrowed’ I figure that The Gordian Knot is on the hook for between a million and a million and a half dollars.”

“I’ll just write them all a check, Ron. You just see that I get all of those bills,” Travis said. “Money isn’t the problem as I see it. Staying alive and being ABLE to pay those bills might be. Besides, with the amount of stuff we requisitioned, I might be able to negotiate volume discounts.”

“Gunny said not to believe half of what you said,” Ron commented. “What was that all about?”

“Ask Gunny,” Travis replied. (Ron never did find out.)

They started the guard rotation at 1800 hours that night. With 10 of them to pull guard duty the shifts were about 40 hours apart, effectively changing the shift every time you pulled duty. On the northern Arizona border a group dressed as soldiers made it around the roadblock at Teec Nos Pos and down highway 160 to highway 89 and on into Flagstaff. They should have just stopped in the deserted community of Flagstaff, but instead they took I-17 to Phoenix.

“Anyone know what day it is?” Gunny asked. No one was sure.

“It’s July 4, 2005, people; it is time to fry the chicken and break out the beer,” Gunny laughed.

They needed a break and it didn’t take then all that long to get into the spirit of Independence Day. Jim and Ed ran up to Mesa and got a keg and left a \$50 bill along with their name. Sandy pulled a bag of mixed chicken quarters out of the freezer to thaw and the other ladies got busy making potato salad and other side dishes.

According to the TV, most of the nation was having all of the usual celebrations except for 2 areas, Los Angeles and Washington. Powell made an address and briefly referred to the problems they were having get the power back on in Arizona, but he assured his audience that it would just be a matter of days.

“What I don’t understand is why they can’t get either the reactor at Palo Verde or that coal fired plant up in Holbrook (Cholla) back on line,” Gunny said.

The Palo Verde plant is the largest nuclear energy generating facility in the United States. It is located about 50 miles west of Phoenix in Tonopah, Arizona. The facility is on about 4,000 acres. Approximately 2,500 people are employed there. Construction began in 1976. There are three units, the last of which was completed in 1988. The total cost to build the plant was \$5.9 billion.

“I don’t get it either, Gunny,” Travis said. “Arizona Public Service has a total of 32 generating plants with over 4 million kilowatts of capacity. Cholla is their largest coal fired plant, but they get as much energy out of 4 Corners as Cholla and together they equal their share of Palo Verde. Those 3 units only account for about ½ of their capacity.”

“Maybe they’re afraid that until they get those 3 plants up and running, they’d be forced into a blackout and pull everything down,” Ron suggested. “As hot as it is, the demand would be tremendous. You’re talking about 2 billion watts of power.”

Ron had hit the nail on the head, more or less. Not being able to get Palo Verde up due to reactor problems was a cover story. In the process of inspecting the plant, workers had discovered a ‘device’ that didn’t belong and had called in a NEST Team. So far, they hadn’t been able to figure out how to disarm the device and it obviously didn’t have a timer. They had identified a series of sensors that would trigger the device at the slightest movement. The total output of Palo Verde was staggering and it was the largest nuclear power plant in the county and probably one of the safest. Triggering the device could lead to possible enrichment by the three reactor cores and an explosion they couldn’t even begin to calculate. And even if the reactor material didn’t detonate we are talking about a dirty bomb of unimaginable size. So, rather than alarm the public, they cooked up the cover story.

One would have thought that Powell would have laid out the truth after that disastrous testimony he’d given to the UN. But that was different; it had been faulty intelligence and not necessarily his fault. If the truth came out about this cover up, it would be laid right on his doorstep. They’d started out innocently saying that they were having trouble getting Palo Verde on line, omitting only the reference to the dangerous condition at the facility. Then, one thing led to another and well, you know...

That was where all of the people had gone, exactly nowhere. They were camped out in dozens of hastily erected camps being fed and housed the by Army. Of course, a lot of people probably thought that those meal trays that was the newest Army ration weren’t exactly food. But, it was hot and free.

Phoenix had taken a fairly high dose of fallout, but it wasn’t of the longer lasting isotopes and had quickly decayed. Not all of the Native Americans were happy about being moved to a new Res, at least that’s how many thought of it, and a lot of them had

slipped back into Arizona. So in addition to the 11 families who rode out the fallout in a shelter south east of Mesa, there were thousands of Native Americans and some hard cases inside the state, some of them wearing military uniforms. How unlikely is that scenario? Reasonably accurate possibility, if you think about it.

“It might not hurt to start some patrols,” Gunny suggested. “We can run a pair of trucks through the Phoenix area and take care of any looters who might have slipped in.”

“We can run a couple of 4-man units,” Ron said, “But that will cut us to the quick here at the ranch.”

“So, Army man,” Gunny laughed, “Get out those civilian M14’s and teach the women to shoot. We can also teach the older kids.”

“Why not,” Ron said, “We have more than enough equipment. You want to do the training?”

“Might as well,” Gunny said.

“Just remember that these are civilians, not a bunch of Marine Corp recruits,” Ron suggested.

“There’s nothing wrong with Marine Corp training, you Army puke,” Gunny snapped.

“I didn’t say there was Gunny; I only said to remember that they’re civilians, not a bunch of scared kids who think you’re God.” (How thick WAS that crust, I wonder?)

Thus it happened that Gunny started a firearms familiarization course in the rifle, caliber 7.62mm, M1A, semi-automatic, gas-operated, with 20-round removable box magazine. After teaching them to disassemble and reassemble the rifle, not blindfolded thank God, they dry fired until they could keep a dime on the barrel when they squeezed the trigger and then went to the range. When Gunny was satisfied that they could avoid shooting each other, he gave Ron the go ahead for the patrols to begin.

On July 8, 2005 two fully fueled club cab pickups departed the ranch at 0700, each vehicle containing 4 men. They drove up to Apache Junction and turned left headed for Phoenix. It was still eerie due to the absence of barking dogs or birds in the air. Once in Phoenix, they turned south on 7th Street. Just before they got to I-10, they ran into a military patrol. The soldiers stopped them and asked what they were doing. The man in charge pointed out that they were the only local law enforcement in the area and were just checking out Mesa, Tempe and Phoenix. After a brief discussion the soldiers let them go.

“There was something a bit strange about those soldiers,” Gunny said to Ron.

“I didn’t notice anything Gunny, what did you see?” Ron asked.

“You Army guys blouse your trousers, right?” Gunny asked.

“They did when I was in, yes,” Ron replied. “Hey that’s right, their trousers weren’t bloused.”

“Notice anything else?” Gunny asked.

“No, what?” Ron asked.

“The Army issues M16’s, not AR15’s,” Gunny said. “Alice gear was replaced by Molle; and they had rifles and pistols. Does the Army issue both at the same time?”

“Of course not, Gunny,” Ron said, “Almost never.”

“We did things a little different in Force Recon,” Gunny said, “But, if they’re real soldiers, I’ll, eat my hat.”

Ron grabbed the radio and told Jim to stop the other vehicle. He outlined what Gunny had noticed and said that they needed to turn around and check these guys out. Staying off the main drag, they drove to within 2 blocks of where they had run into the roadblock and dismounted.

Those soldiers weren’t wearing any body armor either, so six of the men took the MP5’s and Ron and Gunny kept their M1A’s. Now, they had body armor, courtesy of Sheriff Vanderpool (they left him a note and list) and they donned it and headed out. When they got back to the vicinity of the roadblock, they could see that the men were going through stores and coming out with high value items, mostly jewelry.

“Sheriff’s Department, hold it right there,” Ron shouted.

“Screw you,” one of the men shouted and grabbed for his AR.

A brief firefight ensued resulting in the death of all of the ‘soldiers’ and a couple of their members being wounded. The wounds were not serious, so they patched the guys up first and then gathered all of the ‘soldiers’ loot. This they deposited at the Phoenix PD, with a brief note of explanation. Next, they headed back to the ranch so the nurses could treat the wounds properly.

“Normal combat operation,” Gunny mused later. “Hundreds upon hundreds of hours of boredom, followed by a few minutes of sheer terror.”

“If we hadn’t insisted that all of the staff go through the training classes, it would have been a lot different, Gunny,” Ron suggested. “That was pretty observant of you to notice those small details back there.”

“You should have caught those too, Ron,” Gunny said. “We teach situational awareness, remember. The minute we saw anyone, we needed to be suspicious.”

“I guess I let the uniforms distract me,” Ron admitted.

“I doubt that you’ll make that mistake again,” Gunny said. “They looked pretty proper for Nam era soldiers, but the damned government keeps changing gear all of the time and unless you’re in the service, you might not know what current issue is. I keep in touch with some friends at 29 Palms and Ft. Irwin, so I know what is going on.”

“These vests we got from Vanderpool aren’t really much protection against rifles,” Ron pointed out.

“We can’t get the Interceptor stuff, that’s military only,” Gunny said, “But we might be able to come up with something better than what we have. Point Blank makes a full range of products. We need to check out the Phoenix PD and see what their SWAT Unit used.”

“I wonder how much longer it’s going to be before they start letting the people come back,” Ron wondered aloud.

“There’s something they’re not telling, Ron,” Gunny suggested. “I can’t think of a single reason that they don’t have those power plants back on line.”

“It’s only 50 miles out to Palo Verde, maybe we should go check,” Ron suggested.

“There ya go,” Gunny said, “Let’s do that tomorrow, I’ve had enough excitement for one day.”

The two men who had been shot weren’t in a bad way. They had flesh wounds that were painful but would heal in time. They’d both gotten lucky and the bullets had passed right through, missing bone and blood vessels. The nurses deadened the areas, debrided the wounds, gave them doses of antibiotics and pain pills and sent them to rest. They went through their equipment that night and got ready for the next day’s trek, and then got some rest.

Around 0700, 2 pickups departed the ranch headed to Palo Verde. They arrived around 0830 in the vicinity. There was no mistaking these soldiers as being the real thing; they had full battle gear and M4 carbines.

“What are you people doing here?” a Sergeant asked. “This is a restricted area. And you shouldn’t even be in the state.”

“I’m Jim Smith and this fella is Ed Alpert,” Jim said. “We’re members of Sheriff Roger Vanderpool’s Posse in Pinal County. We didn’t evacuate and stayed in a shelter through the fallout. We deputized these other folks who were with us. All of us worked for a

place in Mesa called The Gordian Knot, a survival school. I suppose we need to speak with whoever is in charge.”

“I’m Major William Cooper,” the Major introduced himself. “The Sergeant says that you people are from Mesa?”

“That’s right Major,” Jim said. “Ron here is the manager of The Gordian Knot, a survival school. We went to ground in a shelter rather than evacuate. What’s going on here and why aren’t the people back in Arizona? We don’t believe these stories on TV about not being able to get the power back on line.”

“We’re going to need to evacuate all of you people,” Major Cooper said.

“That’s not going to happen, Major,” Ron butted in. “Now answer Jim’s question, what’s going on here?”

“We have a nuclear device that was planted here near one of the reactors that we haven’t been able to defuse,” Cooper replied. “It’s a Soviet warhead from what we can determine, but that’s not the problem. Whoever rigged this thing set it up to go off if anyone attempted to disarm it. The NEST boys and our nuclear specialists haven’t figured out how to do that without setting it off.”

“You haven’t managed to keep people out of Arizona, either,” Jim said. “We had a set with a bunch of guys dressed up as soldiers in Phoenix. They were looting stores for high value items, mostly jewelry. Probably would have hit the banks, too when they got around to it.”

“What happened to them?” Cooper asked.

“They’re piled up like cordwood right where we had the fight,” Ed said. “We took all of their loot to the Phoenix PD and dropped it off.”

“Like I told you, we’re going to need to evacuate all of your people,” Cooper responded.

“Are you sending troops into guard Phoenix and Flagstaff and the other cities?” Gunny asked.

“No,” Cooper replied, “That’s too risky.”

“Then, we’ll be on our way,” Gunny said.

The Gordian Knot – Chapter 6 – A Difference of Opinion

“I’m afraid that I can’t allow that, Sergeant get their weapons,” Cooper said.

“You should have done that before you let us in here,” Gunny said. His SA TRP was pointed directly at Cooper’s head.

The Free Dictionary defines a ‘Méxican Standoff’ as a situation where no one can emerge as a clear winner. Except, in this instance, the sides weren’t really opposing each other; they just had a difference of opinion. There was a pause and then Cooper spoke.

“I said get their weapons, Sergeant,” Cooper raised his voice.

“Major Cooper,” Ron said. “If you will provide troops to secure the cities, we’ll be more than willing to leave Arizona. Otherwise, we’re all you’ve got protecting the Phoenix area.”

“It’s your funeral,” Cooper said. “Disregard my order Sergeant. Is there anything we can provide you people with other than body bags?”

“How about some of that Interceptor Body Armor with level IV plates?” Gunny asked lowering the hammer on his TRP and returning it to its holster.

“How many sets?” Cooper asked.

“24,” Gunny replied. “We have 11 families including 2 teenagers old enough to fight.”

“Sergeant, can we come up with 24 vests?”

“We’ll have to transport it in, Sir,” the Sergeant answered.

“Anything else, Gentlemen,” Cooper asked. “No LAW rockets or AT4’s or M16’s?”

“We have all of the firepower we need, Major Cooper, thank you,” Ron said. “Some of us have military backgrounds, but we’re acting in the capacity of civilian Law Enforcement. We don’t have time to train everyone on the use of those heavier weapons. We have access to the SWAT equipment of the Phoenix PD and the equipment of the Maricopa and Pinal County Sheriff’s offices. Besides, if the military does its job, we won’t get many people in the area anyway.”

“Could you use a radio?” Cooper asked. “We can outfit you with some SINCGARS gear.”

“We’ll take that,” Gunny quickly accepted.

“Listen, if this thing goes off, nobody has any idea how big the explosion will be and you’re going to be in for a dose of radioactive fallout that you can’t believe,” Cooper said. “We won’t be able to warn you because we’ll all be dead.”

“We have plenty of those recalibrated Civil Defense Survey Meters and dosimeters,” Ron informed him. “You can fly in a chopper and land it at these coordinates, Major Cooper.”

“You people are crazy, you know that don’t you?” Cooper insisted.

“Major, do you have a photocopier?” Ron asked.

“Yes, why?” Cooper asked.

“We requisitioned a lot of equipment to keep going,” Ron explained. “We left a list of what we took and a note telling whomever to bill The Gordian Knot. It might look better if you have a copy of the list and can get in touch with those storeowners. We can transfer money to pay for everything and there won’t be any question of our being looters. Travis Dean, the owner of The Gordian Knot will pay for everything, but he wants volume discounts.”

“I was wondering if you’d been looting yourselves,” Cooper said. “Ok, we’ll pass the list along. What’s the phone number there if these people have any questions or want to negotiate?”

“It’s on the slip of paper with the coordinates of the ranch,” Ron said. “How long until we get those vests and the radio?”

“Maybe 48 hours,” Cooper said. “I’ll also track down the 2 Sheriff’s and the Police Chief’s for the area and bring them up to speed.”

“You probably know him as ‘America’s Toughest Sheriff’, a name given to him by the media years ago. It’s a name he certainly has earned as the head of the nation’s fourth largest Sheriff’s Office (Maricopa County). But even before he became Sheriff in 1993, Joe Arpaio was one tough lawman.

“Jack F. Harris was the Phoenix Chief of Police, Ralph Tanner the Chief of Tempe and Dennis Donna has served as Mesa’s Police Chief since November 2002. There were a lot of Police Departments in the greater Phoenix area to be notified including Apache Junction, Arizona State University Police, Avondale, Chandler, El Mirage, Gilbert, Glendale, Paradise Valley, Peoria, Scottsdale, Tolleson, numerous Tribal Police Departments and Heaven knows whom else.”

Except, the government couldn’t seem to locate the heads of the tribal police departments. They’d been all in one or two locations, but in the interim, had disappeared.

Someone suggested that they probably got tired of the waiting and headed back to the Res. Two days later a Blackhawk landed at the ranch.

“SINCGARS is a new family of VHF-FM combat net radios which provides the primary means of command and control for Infantry, Armor and Artillery Units. SINCGARS is designed on a modular basis to achieve maximum commonality among the various ground and airborne system configurations. A common Receiver Transmitter (RT) is used in the manpack and all vehicular configurations. SINCGARS family of radios has the capability to transmit and receive voice, tactical data and record traffic messages and is consistent with NATO interoperability requirements. The system operates on any of the 2320 channels between 30-88 megahertz and is designed to survive in a nuclear environment. COMSEC for the basic radio is provided by use of the VINSON device. An Integrated COMSEC (ICOM) version of the SINCGARS is currently in production. SINCGARS is operable in a hostile environment through use of Electronic Counter Countermeasure (ECCM). SINCGARS replaces the current standard man pack and vehicular radios, AN/PRC-77 and AN/VRC-12 family, respectively. An airborne version of the SINCGARS radio is in production and will replace the currently standard aircraft radios, AN/ARC-114 and AN/ARC-131.”

Pretty spiffy, huh? They also had a large assortment of the Interceptor Vests and level IV plates. One by one, the people were properly fitted with the correct size and issued the level IV plates. A soldier installed an antenna on the tower and he set the SINCGARS equipment up in the shelter. He told them that the people in Palo Verde thought that they had found a way around the entire bobby trap setup on that nuke and would be trying to disarm it the following morning.

“What’s in that other bundle Sergeant?” Gunny asked.

“Series 2 MOPP gear, Gunny. Enough for everyone except the very small children. There’s M-40 masks and CP gear, too,” the Sergeant explained.

MOPP gear consists of:

- Battledress over garment--a two-piece suit in a camouflage pattern.
- Chemical-protective footwear covers (overboots) of impermeable black, unsupported butyl rubber soles and butyl sheet rubber uppers.
- Chemical-protective glove set with impermeable black, butyl rubber outer gloves for protection and thin, white cotton inner gloves to absorb perspiration.
- Protective mask with hood having a voicemitter to make communicating easier, two outserts to protect the eye lenses and keep lenses from fogging in low temperatures, filter elements in cheeks of face piece, a tube for drinking water from the canteen while masked, a waterproof bag to protect the filter elements from water damage and a carrier for storing and transporting the mask.

They stored all of that gear in the shelter.

"What do you think, Gunny?" Ron said. "Do we need to get everyone into the shelter tomorrow morning?"

"Not unless we see a big mushroom cloud or hear a big boom," Gunny laughed. "I'll tell you one thing, Ron, if that thing goes off and we get hit with the wrong isotopes, there won't be enough food in that shelter to do us any good."

"I'm going to mount the probe from a CD V-700 outside of the shelter and extend the wire," Ron said. "That will tell us when the radiation level falls if that bomb goes off and we end up back in the shelter for a couple of weeks. Get some of the guys and head up to Mesa and get some large tents that we can park the vehicles in. I don't know if it will make any difference or not, but if there is fallout and we can keep it off the metal surfaces, we can still use the vehicles. What time did he say they were going to start disarming that bomb?"

"0800," Gunny replied.

"Ok, we'll get everyone into the shelter no later than 0745, just in case," Ron said.

"You can forget about that V-700," Gunny said, "It's only rated to 50mR/hr. It will get oversaturated and not be any good. If you have a CD V-717, it might work."

"Ok, I won't bother and will install the V-717 instead if I have one," Ron agreed. "But I'll make sure all of the radios are disconnected from the antennas and all of the communications gear is in the shelter."

"That's a good idea, Ron," Gunny said, "We'll pull everything out of the vehicles that EMP can destroy or damage and put it in the shelter."

Ron looked through their supplies and found the only CD V-717 they had. He mounted it just as he had intended to mount the V-700. With the tents erected and the vehicles stripped, they were ready the next morning and at 0745, everyone except Gunny and Ron were in the shelter. A few minutes after 0800, the ground shook slightly.

"Oh, crap," Gunny said.

Ron ran to the top of the mound of earth covering the shelter and saw the beginnings of a mushroom shaped cloud to the west. He told Gunny that the bomb had gone off and to get his ass in the shelter. Once the shelter was buttoned up tight, they reconnected the radio antennas. Any danger of EMP was past. The military had assigned them the call sign of Golf Kilo One, probably the military acronym for Gordian Knot. The TV was still operating because the fallout hadn't reached them, yet.

"It will be interesting to see how Powell talks his way out of this one," Travis said.

My fellow Americans, Powell addressed the nation from Mt. Weather.

Shortly after 8am Mountain time, a nuclear weapon placed at the Palo Verde Nuclear Generating Plant exploded as members of the military were attempting to disarm it. The device was approximately of 2MT yield and your government was uncertain what would happen if it were detonated. Fortunately, there wasn't a chain reaction that detonated the 3 reactor cores. A substantial portion of the cores had been safely removed and moved to storage.

We initially couldn't bring Palo Verde back on line because of the device and decided not to bring any other power back on line for fear that people would return to their homes. Recently we learned of a group in the Phoenix area that had survived in a shelter during the original period of fallout and had taken it upon themselves to police the greater Phoenix area to protect everyone's possession from looters who slipped past the military roadblocks. Two members of that group are retired Los Angeles Police Officers and members of the Pinal County Sheriff's Posse.

In approximately 2 weeks, we will begin the initial cleanup of the area east of Palo Verde. Everyone should be able to return to his or her home as soon as that cleanup is complete. The people in Mesa are equipped with military communications gear and we are attempting to establish contact with them at the moment.

Thank you and good morning. God Bless America.

"We're famous," someone said.

"More like infamous," Gunny chuckled.

"Golf Kilo One, this is Survival Flight One, how copy over," a voice came over the military radio.

"Lima Charlie, over," Ron replied.

"What is your sitrep?" the pilot asked.

"We're buttoned up and waiting it out," Ron explained. "Negative injuries."

"Copy, buttoned up and negative injuries," the pilot repeated back. "I'm at Bingo fuel, got to boogie. Survival Flight One out."

"Golf Kilo One," Ron said.

"This V-781 is going crazy, Jim said."

"Break out a deck of cards and the poker chips," Gunny said, "We're going to be here for a while."

Given their previous experience of being cooped up for 2 weeks in the shelter, they had added all sorts of entertaining things to keep the children occupied and prevent the adults from getting cabin fever. I suppose a sane man might have left the Phoenix area when they knew that there was a possibility of a second bomb exploding only maybe 70 miles away as the crow flies. But, they had figured that those military people had put off attempting to disarm the device until they were relatively certain of success, hence there was little risk of the device going off. Still, one couldn't be too careful, thus the retreat to the shelter. The outside world knew that they were in the shelter and ok, so it would only be a matter of time until they could egress and things would get back to normal.

'The best-laid plans of mice and men often go awry.' No matter how carefully a project is planned, something may still go wrong with it. The saying is adapted from a line in 'To a Mouse,' by Robert Burns: 'The best laid schemes o' mice an' men / Gang aft a-gley'."

Nobody asked, but that sounds like the work of a guy named Murphy. The explosion of that 2MT device involved the remaining fuel and control rods. Remember those isotopes the Gunny talked about? And, check out the fallout pattern in the doomsday material at the ki4u.com link. Phoenix quickly became a wasteland. Shortly before they were ready to egress, they got another radio call.

"Golf Kilo One, this is Survival Flight One, how copy over," a voice came over the military radio.

"Lima Charlie, over," Ron replied.

"What is your sitrep?" the pilot asked.

"We're about to egress," Ron explained. "Negative injuries."

"Copy, request egress and negative injuries," the pilot repeated back. "Negative on your request to egress, radiation level is too high. Extend stay to 14 weeks."

"Copy, extend stay to 14 weeks, Golf Kilo One," Ron said.

"Affirmative, Survival Flight One out." the pilot said.

"Golf Kilo One," Ron said.

"What the hell was that all about?" Gunny asked.

"The radiation level must be 10 times higher than we thought Gunny," Ron said. "Under the Seven/Ten rule the radiation drops to 10% of the previous level as time increases by a factor of seven."

Seven/Ten Rule:

0 hour ----- 1000 Roëntgens/hour

7 hours ----- 100 Roëntgens/hour
49 hours ----- 10 Roëntgens/hour
2 weeks ----- 1 Roëntgens/hour
14 weeks ----- 0.1 Roëntgens/hour
98 weeks ----- 0.01 Roëntgens/hour

“We have that MOPP gear, maybe we should have a look around,” Gunny suggested.

“That MOPP gear won’t handle the little kids, Gunny, we’re going to need to figure something out,” Ron said.

“Those MOPP suits are nothing more than heavy clothing containing activated charcoal,” Gunny observed. “Can’t we downsize them for the kids or make something equivalent?”

“We have the Baby Safe Protective PAPR Infant Wraps for the babies, and some of the Child Safe Protective PAPR Hoods for the children under age 8,” Ron said. “All we’ll need is some MOPP type blankets for the babies and some small MOPP suits for the little kids. The M-40 masks include a variety of sizes and I think we have enough of the smallest ones for the kids 8 and up. Do you know how to fit them?”

“I’ll take care of it Ron,” Gunny said, “But it’s not like we don’t have plenty of time. Dang, 12 more weeks of this coffin.”

If you are surprised, don’t be. US Army guidelines require that one MOPP up when the background level reaches 30mR/hr, or so I was told. Normal background radiation might be as much as much as 10mR. MOPP gear outer garments are constructed of several layers of cloth with a layer of activated charcoal in the center. MOPP gear begins to degrade the moment it’s removed from its package, due to the loss of the charcoal center.

Gunny removed one MOPP suit and the ladies made up patterns based on that one suit. Everyone would either get his own MOPP suit, a little copy or be wrapped in a blanket constructed in a similar manner. They were slowly unraveling the Gordian Knot that they faced. The activated charcoal came from water filters stored to filter the water. It took them several weeks to construct those child sized MOPP suits. Gunny fitted everyone with an appropriate sized M-40 mask and they used rubber kitchen gloves as substitutes for the milspec butyl gloves. They used rubber overshoes in place of the rubber boots for the smaller children.

“I guess we’re about as ready as we’re going to get,” Gunny told Ron, Jim, Ed and Travis. “As soon as we get that flyby, we’ll get out and replace all of the stuff we removed from the pickups and prepare to head out. We’d better rig that SINCGARS radio to work from one of the pickups.”

The shelter was installed on a bed of gravel in a 12’ deep hole and covered with the earth that had been removed to make room for the 10’ by 50’ pipe. Additional ado-

be/sand mixture had been brought in when the shelter had been installed and it was covered with 12' of compacted soil.

"Golf Kilo One, this is Survival Flight One, how copy over," a voice came over the military radio.

"Lima Charlie, over," Ron replied.

"What is your sitrep?" the pilot asked.

"We're ready to egress," Ron explained. "Negative injuries."

"Copy, request egress and negative injuries," the pilot repeated back. "Affirmative on your request to egress, radiation level is 300mRad. Say status on transportation."

"EMT sensitive components in shelter. Estimate 48 hours to repair. Golf Kilo One," Ron said.

"Copy 48-hours to Bugout," the pilot confirmed. "Take I-17 north to Flagstaff and proceed to checkpoint west of Flagstaff. Confirm. Survival Flight One, over."

"Copy I-17 north to Flagstaff and west to checkpoint," Ron said. "Golf Kilo One."

"Copy all, Survival Flight One out," the pilot replied.

"Golf Kilo One," Ron said.

"Ok, you heard that," Ron said, "Let's get MOPP'd up, get the parts out to those trucks and get them running."

"Everyone keep an eye on their dehydration level," Gunny advised.

The first day they had most of the trucks up and running and on the second day, they finished the trucks, and fueled them. On the third day, they MOPP'd everyone up, and allotted a CD V-715 Survey meter to every vehicle after loading everyone's possessions in the back of the pickups. They drove the vehicles out of the tents and headed to Phoenix where they picked up I-17 and headed north. About 3 hours later, they arrived in Flagstaff and turned west on I-40. West of Flagstaff the Army had a large staging area set up at the junction with US 89. They were given the once over and directed to one of two gender-designated tents where they shed their MOPP gear before being directed to showers. After a through shower, dang, that felt good, they dressed in an assortment of civilian attire, mostly jeans and western style shirts. They were dozens of boxes of shoes to choose from and once everyone was dressed, they were directed to a mess tent for food and debriefing.

The military had a lot of questions, as did members of the Maricopa and Pinal County Sheriff's Departments. Then there were representatives from each of the area Police Departments. It took most of the day to satisfy the demands for information coming from everyone.

Travis was told that a group of merchants, everyone on their list, wanted to talk to him as soon as they got to Las Vegas, their next stop. Travis had spent several days going down the lists of equipment they requisitioned, marking the equipment they kept and the things they left behind. Anything that came with them would be paid for, but anything they left behind would only receive a rental payment appropriate to the amount of time they used it.

The Gordian Knot – Chapter 7 – The New Location

Gunny pigeonholed a Command Sergeant Major he knew from sometime in his past and talked the CSM into putting in a word for them to keep the Interceptor Vests. The plates were optional, as they were a civilian item. They were told that they could keep the vests if they reimbursed the government for them. With their vehicles decontaminated, where necessary, they headed to Las Vegas so Travis could deal with those merchants.

Travis talked to each merchant separately. Things they kept, he paid for by check after getting a volume discount. The merchants who had been unwitting suppliers of things they left behind were offered a cash rental payment based on time used. Some of them balked until Travis pointed out that they'd probably claim the items as a loss on their insurance claim. He was offering cash, as in greenbacks, and if they double dipped, that was on them, he didn't care one way or the other. They soon got the idea and accepted the rental payments.

Travis also popped for 2 nights on the town and then told them they were going to relocate the business to Las Vegas area and he'd get a lawyer to help everyone with their insurance claims. The lawyer was an insurance expert and he assured them that those 'Act of War' clauses wouldn't be any problem. An act of terrorism wasn't generally included of the definition of a 'War' that was included in the insurance policies. Travis also filed a claim on his business interruption insurance policy. Jim and Ed had returned all of the badges, including their own, to Sheriff Roger Vanderpool personally, together with any other items belonging to his Department.

With all of the recent construction in Las Vegas, Travis found the real estate prices to be total unacceptable. He considered Sloan, Erie and Jean. Sloan was a suburb of Vegas and property was too high to suit him. Erie was mostly an exit, but Jean had a small dirt strip airport and a couple of casinos.

"If I had read that article in the Los Angeles Times the day after Thanksgiving last year," Travis said, "We could have avoided all of this."

"What article?" Ron asked.

"It was titled *Ports Called Enormous Target*," Travis said. "Anyway, what do you think of Jean as a location to rebuild?"

"Well, Travis there's the Gold Strike Casino for lodging for out of state customers, there's that small airstrip, and I doubt Vegas will expand this far in the years to come. If we can get some land a mile or so to the north, we can grade in a gravel road and set the school up there. With the casino so close we'll have to use suppressors on the rifles and pistols to avoid disturbing our new neighbors."

“I’ll make it happen,” Travis said. “The lawyer is just waiting on our having a physical business location to file the paperwork to transfer our FFL. I incorporated The Gordian Knot in Nevada in the first place so all we have to do there is file a change of address.”

There was also a housing issue, and Travis suggested that those trailers had been ok, but a little cramped for some of the families. Why not, he suggested put in a small community of double and triple wide mobile homes and set them up as a demonstration plot? Basically it was the same idea they’d tried at the ranch in Mesa but never got to see the benefit. He had a sharp accountant in San Francisco who had suggested that he could write the home interest expense off as a business expense and the employees would only need to reimburse him for the homes. Either that or they could buy them outright with their insurance settlements.

And what became of Arizona? The state was divided into the north and the south. The capital hadn’t been relocated yet, but word was that Tucson had the edge. A dead zone neatly divided the state and the cleanup was determined to be too costly. To the south, the citizens were serviced by I-8 and to the north I-40. That belt of fallout was laced with a nasty cocktail of isotopes, probably because of the reactors at Palo Verde. There was no death toll beyond the military because when that bomb went off, all of those Native Americans had scooted back out of the state.

If the Jean location had any drawbacks it was the wind. Jean was extremely hot in summer; could be windy and turbulent all times of year. Seemed like a good place to set up some wind turbines, to Travis’s way of thinking. So, he looked until he found a parcel of land about near the airport and they set about to build a closed community. I know what you’re thinking, but this wasn’t envisioned to be one of those survivalist communities, just a closed community built on company land and serving the employees of The Gordian Knot.

Speaking of which, Ron had about gotten a belly full of those Gordian Knot situations. If the military hadn’t tossed in those MOPP suits, or they hadn’t had activated charcoal water filters and a sewing machine, or he hadn’t buried that shelter deep and had it well supplied, or, or and or. During those long weeks, Gunny had gotten to visiting about a Clint Eastwood movie he’d seen called *Heartbreak Ridge*. It was a crock, he claimed, and the only thing useful in the movie was Gunny Highway’s admonition to, *Improvise. Adapt. Overcome.*

A person has to give a guy like Travis credit. He didn’t let a little thing like the total loss of his business dissuade him from pursuing the concept that underlay The Gordian Knot. Rather, he saw it as an opportunity. They had a better idea of what worked and didn’t. If they put in some of those wind turbines, they could be energy independent, too. When they put in the large warehouses for the business, they could add basements to both and put the pistol firing range in the basement of one and a community shelter in the basement of the other. And, why not add a small service station? 3 gas pumps and 3 diesel pumps and enough stabilized fuel for a year. It was a very small service station with only 4 repair bays. Those diesel tanks were also connected to the backup genera-

tors. The area was essentially an old lakebed; in fact, down by Whiskey Pete's at Primm, you could see an old dry lakebed. Travis hired an architect to design their community and told him to make room for up to 100 families, in case the business grew.

In the first warehouse, they recreated the environment of the original Gordian Knot, making improvements to overcome deficiencies that had cropped up at one time or another. In the basement of this warehouse went a 12-lane shooting range, battery storage and backup generators. Their retail store went into the second warehouse, as did the shelter. You may recall that the retail store was principally intended for customers of the school they operated. However, it had to be open to the public because of their FFL, although, given the number of gun stores in Las Vegas they didn't expect to see much business.

The new business opened in late June of 2006 and was an immediate success. Perhaps the fact that the 'Phoenix Survivors' operated it had something to do with that. Or, maybe it was those full-pages ads in the several major newspapers that attracted people. They were booked for a full year in advance. They even got an application from a reporter from the Chicago Tribune who wanted to take the course and do a piece for the paper. He wasn't accepted, by the way.

Jean was in the Southwest region of the Clark County School District. The elementary kids went to the school in Goodsprings, the middle school kids to Sandy Valley and the high school kids to schools in Las Vegas. They were met with the usual challenges of transfer students and their problems were only compounded by the absence of records from Arizona. Eventually, they got that all sorted out and in the fall of 2006, the kids were back in school and the Gordian Knot had all of the students they could handle.

The City of Las Vegas had merged their Police and Sheriff's Departments at one time and Sheriff Bill Young headed the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department. Jean was in the Southwest area under the command of Captain Mark Tavaréz. The LVMPD didn't seem to have a Posse or a Reserve unit; they had a Mounted Unit and a Search and Rescue Unit, however. Some mounted unit, it only had a 12-stall horse barn. And, Ed and Jim were a little long in the tooth to be doing Search and Rescue. Don't go looking for CSI on that website, they never heard of them. A community needs cops, right? So why not set up The Gordian Knot Security Services, headed by a couple of retired LA Cops? It could create all sorts of employment opportunities. Don't most retired police officers end up being rent-a-cops anyway? Confused yet? All of the casino's had their own security departments anyway. Plus there was the Nevada State Gaming Control Board/Nevada Gaming Commission.

Other than being required to set up a separate Limited Liability Corporation (LLC), Travis was able to establish the security firm without difficulty. Ed and Jim secured licenses as Private Investigators and the business was expanded to provide armed guard service, K-9 service and a host of other security related activities. The new company was called TGK, LLC.

In the interim, the country had held special elections in every state to fill the vacancies in the House and Senate. In the case of Senators who were up for reelection in 2006, the Governors' made appointments. Where the Senator was scheduled for an election contest in 2008 or 2010, the seat was filled by ballot. All of the House seats would be up in 2006 and they, too, were filled by ballot. An investigation was launched into the source of the bombs that had devastated Washington, San Pedro and later Palo Verde, but the government wasn't pinning the acts down to any particular organization. You can imagine the speculation that was going on in the media. And, the 9/11 Commission took until 2004 to assign blame for the World Trade Center and Pentagon attacks.

Ever see a warehouse that didn't have a concrete floor? Those US Metal buildings didn't require one, but the basements needed a secure roof. Travis had made a fortune in the Silicon Valley. He'd bought and sold early, capitalizing on the initial success of the industry. Never heard of Travis Dean? Neither had a lot of people and that was strictly to his advantage. Anyway, they constructed 2 buildings, each 160' wide by 360' long with 25' walls and pitched roofs. The basements upon which the buildings sat were of extraordinarily heavy construction with walls 2' thick and earthquake-proof pillars spaced reasonably close together, more than any building code would have required.

"First class starts tomorrow," Gunny observed.

"I know, and I dread it," Ron replied. "I'm having trouble getting back into the spirit of things."

"I'll admit that it's different having Jim and Ed running a separate business, Ron, but the upside is that we ended up with a community of 40 homes because of all of those security guards," Gunny reflected.

"Just more people to worry about," Ron replied. "At least Travis isn't running them all through the E & E School at once."

"He can't, we have too many paying clients," Gunny pointed out. "Pretty slick the way he required all of those students to buy one of our bugout bags and those Springfield Armory guns. That ought to add to the bottom line."

"I'm getting very tired of cutting the Gordian Knot Gunny. Alexander only had to do it once and I've been faced with it 3 times already," Ron lamented.

"Life ain't no picnic kid and it ain't gonna to get no better," Gunny laughed. "Just be happy we ain't teaching the classes."

"Yeah, what's that all about?" Ron asked. "Travis started out hiring ex-cops for Jim and Ed's operation and now he's only hiring ex-special forces like Green Berets, SEALs and Force Recon."

“Me and Travis was having a beer the other night and he has it in mind to only offer Executive Protection Services in the future,” Gunny said. “Those ex-cops that Jim and Ed have will be phased out over the next couple of years into our own small internal security department.”

“What is it with you two?” Ron asked.

“Ask Travis,” Gunny said.

“Travis said to ask you,” Ron protested.

“Then I reckon that it’s for us to know and you to find out, kid,” Gunny said. “I’ve got nothing to say on the subject.”

Ever since Travis had said about the same thing, Ron had been curious. Gunny’s remark only fueled his curiosity. There were puzzles everywhere and he couldn’t take a sword and cut this one open. So, he put it out of his mind and began thinking about what Travis had in mind in terms of an Executive Protection Service. Consider the ad from one such service:

Executive Protection Services goal is to provide excellence in luxury ground transportation along with consistent service each and every time. We establish relationships of trust with our customers and strive to bring them the very best experience possible. Expect superior service and the finest drivers and sedans available.

Corporate Services:

- Enjoy dependable and courteous services.
- Perfect for meetings, luncheons and/or conferences.
- We offer Black Lincoln Luxury Town Cars, Leather Interior, tinted windows & super clean.
- Airport Transfers, as directed wait and returns.
- Direct billing and all major credit cards accepted.
- Transportation programs tailored to your needs
- Certified in executive protection and defensive driving.

Some of the main topics that Executive Protection Services are trained in are:

- Surveillance Detection
- Route Reconnaissance
- Evasive Driving Techniques
- Threat Assessment
- Security Advances
- Client Personal Profiling

It seemed as if this new venture of Travis's had a lot of potential, if you wanted to be a fancy chauffeur. At least that was the way that Ron envisioned the service. What Travis had in mind was more like what Kevin Costner did in the movie *The Bodyguard*. Someone like this guy: *My military experience is extensive and I served in areas that provided the proficiency with which I work today. From 1971 - 1982, I served in the Scots Guards; 1982 - 1984, the Special Forces and 1985 -1988 Special Forces (Sultanate of Oman). I am a weapons instructor (Distinguished), and hold Thornton's Advanced Award Certificate. As a martial artist I'm proficient in Ishin Ryu Ju-Jitsu, and a Specialist in Military Self Defense. I speak good German as well as Arabic. I have very good street awareness, and can access situations quickly. Therefore, avoiding confrontational situations.*

Only his protection would come with an edge, he could provide housing in that oversized shelter if they had enough time to get the client from Las Vegas to Jean. And in that regard, Travis spared no expense. Living in a 10' by 50' corrugated metal pipe for 14 weeks had convinced him that this shelter had to be something better. The inside dimensions were 156' by 356' by 12', or roughly the size of a football field. The shelter had an all-electric commercial kitchen capable of feeding up to 100 people per meal and cafeteria style serving. The dining room doubled as a meeting room/auditorium and there was a fully outfitted communication shack, an armory, office, and several private bedrooms for clients plus men's and women's dormitories.

The sheer volume of radioactive fallout that had hit the Phoenix area had impressed and frightened Travis, though he was loath to admit it. According to some information he'd seen, 2' of concrete was only equivalent to 3' of soil when it came to protection from radiation. Consequently, the roof of the shelter wasn't 2' thick; it was 6' thick and constructed of heavily reinforced concrete. That pipe from Utah Shelter systems had been overlain with 12' of compacted soil and he wanted at least that much protection. The new shelter provided a protection factor of 1,073,741,824. (One billion plus.)

Being out in the middle of nowhere, near Jean, had forced him to dig a large well and install an oversized septic system. Rather than have to revisit the question in the event of future expansion, he installed multiple wells to take full advantage of the aquifer and a 110-home septic system. And because of the high and sporadic winds, the outdoor shooting range was surrounded on 3 sides by rows of conifers to break that wind. He installed 4 wind turbines with a total capacity of 1.4 Mw, plus pv panels and heating panels on all of the homes. The final touch was to cover ½ of both warehouse roofs with pv panels. He had 3 sources of electricity, wind turbines, pv panels and backup generators. Energy from the first 2 sources was stored in a series of 7000 amp, 2.2-volt submarine batteries.

The Gordian Knot – Chapter 8 – Famous Problems

Travis had a very good idea, but he failed to consider that famous people have famous problems. He soon learned that providing security for the rich and famous was a pain in the butt. However, having hired an outstanding staff of former Special Forces people and paying them extravagant wages put him in the position where he couldn't just back out of the business. He'd ended up coming out about even on that mess down in Mesa after all of the insurance settlements, but now, he was in danger of losing a whole lot of money fast.

"Gunny, how the hell am I going to get myself out of this mess?" Travis asked.

"Quit guarding movie stars," Gunny said, "Can I have another beer?"

"But that's been most of our business," Travis protested.

"Most of your business and all of your headaches," Gunny laughed. "It was a good idea having an Executive Protection Service, but you ain't guarding Executives, you're guarding Celebrities. That's a whole different can of worms. Executives try to keep a low profile; with those Hollywood types, it's all about maintaining a high profile. You seen that movie, *The Bodyguard*, right? Every time Costner tried to protect that broad in the movie, they were all worried about her image and went against his advice."

"That was only a movie, Gunny, for crying out loud," Travis sputtered.

"Yeah, I know, but it made the point real good about people not doing what their bodyguards told them to do," Gunny continued. "Now, you take those Executives, they ain't so much in the public eye and they'd be happy if no one recognized them except their Board of Directors and employees."

"I don't know as we can make any money just guarding Execs," Travis protested.

"Sure you can, buy a couple of those fancy corporate jets and provide them door to door coverage."

"Do you have any idea how much a Gulfstream costs?" Travis asked.

"No, but if I wait, you'll tell me."

"I don't know either, but a lot, I'll bet," Travis opined.

"We always buy the best, huh?" Gunny asked, "Why do we do that? I seen an ad for a used Gulfstream IV on the Internet. It was \$15.5 million. At the same website, I seen a Lear 36A for under \$2 million."

“Buying the best usually pays off in the long run Gunny,” Travis said. “Why did you insist on keeping your M14 in Nam when they began to issue M16’s?”

“Plastic piece of crap,” Gunny snapped. “I can spit a bigger chaw than them bullets it shoots.”

“Then why do we have them in our inventory?” Travis asked.

“They improved them some and finally got them to work, but I still prefer a man’s rifle like that M1A.”

“A Gulfstream is simply a better plane than the Lear,” Travis said. “The VC-4, VC-11, VC-20 and C-37A are all Gulfstreams. The latest models even have chaff and flare dispensers. If we’re going to get into having an air fleet, we’ll use Gulfstreams and Bell 430’s. Hell, we could include some Sikorsky S-70s. We’ll have to hire pilots and I’d prefer to hire guys’ right out of the military. We could probably find some Sierra Hotel fly-boys.”

“So, what do you think? A package concept with door to door service?” Gunny asked.

“Beats the hell out of putting up with those other people,” Travis said. “Yeah, we’ll give it a try.”

Want to know who some of those clients were? Me too, but above all else, their clients were entitled to their privacy. Adopting a tactic used by Richard Branson, Travis began to place discrete ads in all of the magazines that corporate executives were likely to read. It was a slow starter, but he was counting as much on word of mouth to sell their service. He touted the door to door service and he had one other selling point.

Want to know how to p o the government? Buy a fleet of used F-5 Tiger II fighters, refurbish them and replace the jet engines with the latest version of a similar power plant and equip them with dummy AIM-9 missiles. And, if you knew the right people, you could even buy real AIM-9’s for about \$100,000 a pop. Now, the government FAA types inspect the aircraft, sign off on the airframes and dummy missiles and you’re in business to provided REAL Executive protection, and even include an option for a fighter escort. All for a fee, of course. The F-5 is essentially the same aircraft as the T-38 Talon trainer. So if your Sierra Hotel pilots are ex Air force Officers, they don’t have much trouble transitioning to the F-5. The basic armament of an F-5 is two 20-mm M39A2 cannons with 280 rounds per gun plus a pair of AIM-9 Sidewinder missiles at the wing-tips. Of course it means that you have to extend that runway down in Jean and lay down some blacktop, but hey, it’s only money, right?

The Confederate Air Force fly’s all kinds of those rebuilt WW II aircraft, so it wasn’t much of a stretch to imagine an Executive Protection Service flying some rebuilt F-5’s, with dummy cannons and missiles, of course. And, there are some people in the world who will pay for just about anything if it gives them a little extra prestige. Of course the

Gulfstream pilots claimed that they knew nothing about those F-5's and could only 'assume' that they were real weapons. Sort of opens up a whole new market for clients, too, like some of those small fascist South American Dictators all worried about a rival killing them off on a trip to Los Estados Unidos up in Norteamérica.

You have to be awfully careful, though, you never know when the FAA is going to pull a surprise inspection of those aircraft. Of course the only difference between the dummy AIM-9's and the real things was fuel for the motor and a real warhead. And, it's really a little difficult for some of those inspectors to tell the difference. And, they'd probably got away with it because what was the likelihood of their ever needing to really engage a hostile aircraft? And at \$100 per hour or \$2,000 a day, for a bodyguard, it didn't take very long for the revenues to start rolling in. A Gulfstream rented for \$3,500 an hour and the 430's for \$1,250 an hour. A fighter escort was out of the reach of all but the most powerful and wealthy Executives. Still, it didn't take a lot of Executives to turn the business into a thriving venture.

Travis plowed every penny he cleared back into TGK, LLC and before too long a single Gulfstream became 2, then 4 and finally 6. He added Bell 430's to keep pace with the small fleet of Jets and hired more ex-special forces types. Then, they opened a second school to train prospective security people. That school combined the best elements of the survival school with training provided by ex-members of the US Secret Service who had experience on protective details.

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The fall of 2008 saw a lot of things changed in Jean. Little Maria was 3 year old and had a baby brother, Travis. The fleet of Gulfstreams and Bell helicopters was now based at McCarran International (LAS) and the fleet of 8 F-5 Freedom Fighters in Jean. While the client load for the survival school had tapered off, they covered the shortfall with students from the security school. They also became a prime supplier for security equipment. They added H&K to their line because they got a lot of requests for MP5K-PDW and the newer MP7A1, a lighter and more powerful sub machinegun. They also added H & K's full line plus that of Glock and SiG. All aspects of their operation were doing very well.

Alma had persuaded Collin not to seek election to the office of the President, just like before. She'd never wanted him in the post in the first place and a lot of the country, especially the media it seemed, placed the blame for what happened in Arizona directly on his doorstep. Never mind it had occurred on Dubya's watch, it had been he who misled the public, hence it was entirely his fault. It looked like the Democrat party was going to have its turn at mismanaging the government for the next 4 years. What we needed to have happen was some sort of terrorist event while the Democrats were in power and something more than a truckload of explosive at the WTC or in Oklahoma City. Oops, be careful what you wish for, there's God and his sense of humor and Murphy is hanging around somewhere.

Sandy had taken a job teaching at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV) and she returned in the fall of 2008. They had daycare right there at the compound and both Ron and Julia were available if there was a problem. She was teaching classes in Archaeology and Anthropology. Still carried that Galco purse, too, plus one of Ron's BOB's in her trunk.

The casino boom was over, they'd overbuilt Vegas to the point that only recently had they gotten to the point that running a casino was lucrative. One of the problems of course was the fact that Las Vegas had so much competition around the country. It had taken the US economy a while to get over Bush and the Republicans, but it was healthy and growing by leaps and bounds. And on November 4, 2008, the election was held with the Democrats regaining complete control of Washington. Washington had been rebuilt, except for the destroyed Monuments and they were working on them. Powell had eventually nominated a series of moderates to the high bench and they'd all been approved. The problem with a moderate on the Supreme Court is that you never know how they're going to vote on an issue. And all of these Justices were middle aged, so they would be in that new building for the foreseeable future.

As one might have expected, Powell had reversed some of the trends to downsize the military. He had the Army back up to 13 Divisions, headed for 15, and had slightly accelerated the program to build additional Virginia class submarines. Batch 1 was nearly all commissioned and Batch 2 had all been ordered. And, he accelerated the building of CV-78, the Gerald R. Ford, & 79 (unnamed), the latest generation of Aircraft Carrier replacing the Nimitz class. "On 22 July 2004 Army officials announced plans to accelerate the delivery of selected future combat systems to the current force. All the changes increased the total cost by \$20-\$25 billion, about 25% higher than the original estimate of \$92 billion. A significant increase to the current System Development and Demonstration (SDD) phase funding of \$14.78 billion is required to accomplish the changes."

Future American soldiers would look more like Imperial Storm Troopers once the new Army was fully fielded. I guess that explains why the economy had improved so much, huh? On the other hand, some things weren't being changed. Those Special Forces types already had cutting edge equipment and some things were better left unchanged. Special Forces relied on stealth, as much as anything and there was nothing stealthy about an Objective Force Warrior. The goal was to fully field the 'new' Army by 2010. And, unsure of the direction that the new military was headed applications from people with Special Forces backgrounds were at an all-time high.

The sudden spurt in arms manufacturing had the European Union in a thither. Coupled with the increases in the size of the American Army, Navy and Air Force, many were concluding that the US was bent on a new round of Imperialism. While nothing could have been further from the truth, it did spawn a bit of an arms race. I say a bit because weapons systems are expensive and many nations simply couldn't afford to keep pace with the US. The Germans were an interesting example. Publicly they lambasted the US, but that didn't stop them from selling us more cannon barrels or firearms.

European forces were now equipped with the EF-2000 Eurofighter, the Rafale C & M models and the JAS39 Gripen. Their armor forces were either equipped with the latest variants of the Leopard 2, the Challenger 2 MBT's or the Leclerc. The Americans had surged ahead with the development of the Joint Strike Fighter because the new carriers were designed around the aircraft. Originally scheduled for delivery beginning in 2008, at modified quantities, the objectives had changed with the Air Force now going for 2,036 aircraft, the Marines for 642 aircraft and the Navy for 480 aircraft. The cost of the F-22 Raptor at \$¼ billion each, had almost busted the Air Force and they had halted the production, which also had been accelerated, at 189 aircraft.

Meanwhile, on the other side of the Pacific, the People's Republic of China and its partners in Bush's Axis of Evil, Iran and North Korea, were considering their options. The late President had gotten some things right; plus, he knew how to spell potato. After the elections, in January of 2009, the Democrats tried to halt the military expansion, but their efforts were too little, too late. Everything was too far along to scrap and they hadn't really added any new systems, just accelerated existing plans. Naturally, the Republicans had some skillful parliamentarians and they locked the House and Senate up tighter than a bank vault. If the Democrats wanted their social programs that was fine with the Republicans, just as long as they left the military alone.

For my older audience, I should point out that it was a repeat of the Reagan, Bush and Clinton administrations. Reagan built us up, Bush was a caretaker and Clinton tore it all down. It's ok to leave G.H.W. Bush out of the equation, if you prefer, Reagan built and Clinton destroyed.

"You know that with that new bunch Travis hired we've run out of spaces for homes, don't you?" Jim observed.

"That shouldn't be a problem, Jim," Ron said. "We can cut down those trees, move the range and put in spaces for 100 more. There is plenty of room for more turbines and those submarine batteries. All we'll have to do is upgrade the septic system to 210 units and start adding homes."

"Did you ever imagine that this venture would grow like this?" Ed asked.

"Not really, no, but Travis has a head for business." Ron said. "I suppose we'll have to add more backup generators and a third building just to handle the security training school. That will boost our solar electrical capacity."

"What are we going to put in the basement of the new building?" Ed asked.

"We can add a new well, but other than that, I'm not sure," Ron said. "Why don't you ask Travis when you discuss the new building with him?"

"Ok, we'll go talk to him now," Jim said.

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“Ron says that we can add more wind turbines and expand the septic system, Travis,” Jim explained. “He wasn’t sure what we’d put in the basement of the new building we need for the security school.”

“I’m thinking that we need to move all of the storage and retail operations out of the second warehouse and move it to the new one,” Travis suggested. “We can use the old warehouse exclusively for our security operations and security school. As far as the basement of the new warehouse is concerned, we can use about $\frac{2}{3}$ of it for storage and the remainder for dormitories.”

“That’s a lot of beds,” Jim observed, “Who are we going to house, the entire city of Las Vegas?”

“No, that wouldn’t be nearly enough room for them, but we have two neighbors down the road at exit 12. There’s the Gold Strike and the Nevada Landing plus the people at the airport,” Travis pointed out. “I’ll contact those two operations and see about getting a contract with them to provide shelter services.”

“You’d better just make that entire basement into dormitories, if you’re going to do that,” Jim remarked.

“I can do that, but we’ll have to do something different with the warehouse then,” Travis agreed. “I wonder how much it would cost to build the warehouse out of reinforced concrete and turn it into a blast-proof bunker?”

“That’s what you have an architect for, Travis,” Ed said, “We just a couple of tired old cops.”

One of the advantages of living in southern Nevada is that you can do construction year round. Travis wasn’t getting grossly rich with his new ventures, but he wasn’t losing any money either. The third basement went in and it was topped with a 160’ by 360’ by 25’ bunker that was further topped by 12’ of compacted earth. The new basement was connected to basement #2 and it to basement #1. They mounted additional solar panels on the mound of earth, added additional wind turbines and additional generators. The diesel fuel storage was doubled. They also moved the armory to the new warehouse, freeing space in the original shelter.

The Nevada Landing Casino closed in March 2007, but the Gold Strike remains active. At Primm, formerly State Line, there are 3 casinos, Buffalo Bill's, Primm Valley Resort and Whiskey Pete's.

Travis had approached the owners of the Gold Strike and Nevada Landing and they initially thought him crazy. He pointed out that with the military buildup all over the world, it wouldn’t take much for things to go to hell in a hurry. All he was offering was a secure

motel, of sorts, plus security. However, unless they contracted for his services, he'd just move down the road and talk to the people at Whiskey Pete's, Buffalo Bill's and the Primm Valley Resort and Casino. It was first come, first served. The Gold Strike caved in but Nevada Landing didn't. The fee was \$1 per day per bed to reserve space and the fee, should the shelter be used, \$20 per bed per day with meals extra. The casino/hotels could pay The Gordian Knot and mark everything up as much as the traffic would bear.

The hotel at the Gold Strike is 31 stories and 1,200 rooms. Gold Strike was on the hook for $2,400 \times 365 = \$876,000$ /year, and that was for nothing. 2,400 times \$20 a day was \$48,000 per day and that didn't count those employees. And, if they ended up being in the shelter for 14 nights, that would be another \$672,000 plus all of those meals. In the end, the second shelter contained male and female dormitories, bathrooms and a large dayroom where people could take their meals and watch TV.

The dormitories contained military bunk beds packed about as tight as one dared put them. It could have been a recipe for disaster had not there been all of those security forces. Travis figured to recoup his investment in under 5 years for the equipment and under ten years for everything. You might be surprised how many companies sold the surplus military bunk beds. \$660 bought complete beds for 6 people. 4 months' worth of retainer paid for all of the bunk beds. A bunk bed takes 15 square feet of space and you could add another 18 square feet of space for the aisle at one end and beside the bed.

The only problem was that a shelter that was 156' by 356' divided into $3\frac{1}{2}$ equal spaces (with the $\frac{1}{2}$ representing the bathroom areas) only made room for 980 people, 490 of each gender. The commitment was for 2,400 people plus the employees. No problem, you simply construct a 4-story shelter from the get-go. Only the outside walls needed to be concrete anyway. And, back in the original shelter, you converted the old armory to additional cooking facilities. Just don't expect the fare to be something like the food served at "The Top of the Mark". And, for furniture, you pack in some of those 96" by 30" tables and some cheap stacking chairs. This sort of gives a whole new meaning to closeness. But, what the hell, you'll never use it, so it was nothing to worry about, right? Right! And those casino/hotels are never full anyway, except on holidays, so the people wouldn't be packed too tight.

"Jeezus H.," Gunny exclaimed after the new shelter and bunker were completed. "We pack that facility full of people and we won't have enough people or guns to maintain order."

"Sure we will Gunny," Ron said, "There's plenty of CS and riot control equipment."

"You remember how edgy everyone got down in Mesa?" Gunny asked. "Imagine that multiplied by 100, no make that 1,000, these people won't have the discipline we had."

"With any luck we'll never have to find out," Ron said.

“Yeah, Gunny, what makes you think that this is any more than an exercise in futility?” Jim asked.

“Well, fellas, there’s a lot to consider, like Murphy’s Law, for example,” Gunny said. “If it can go wrong it will and of all the possible outcomes, you usually get the worst.”

“Nobody is going to attack the United States,” Ed said, “The results would be too horrible to imagine. We’d retaliate and before you knew the whole world would be involved. Those people in Washington know that. They’d never start anything.”

“I don’t figure they would,” Gunny said, “But who’s to say that someone else might not start it and then it would be, ‘Katie bar the door, here come the Indians’?”

“You’re just an alarmist, Gunny,” Ed insisted.

“Uh, huh,” Gunny muttered.

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“Big holiday weekend coming, Travis,” Ron said. “With New Year’s Eve being on a Thursday, the casino/hotels are all booked to capacity.”

“Is everything ready to go in those shelters?” Travis asked. “I don’t like what I’m hearing on the news.”

“We can’t cram another item into the warehouse,” Ron said. “We just took delivery of several new shipments of supplies. I think you’re crazy, but I did what you said. We have enough food on hand to feed every bed we have for a year. Even when we got held over in Mesa, we were only there for 14 weeks, why do you insist on have a year’s supply of food?”

“When Gunny and I were in Vietnam, we saw a lot of villagers starving, Ron,” Travis said. “It wasn’t that they couldn’t grow food, but as soon as they harvested it, the Viet Cong or NVA would grab it. I swore that if I had anything to say about it, that situation would never happen again.”

“It must have been tough for you and Gunny in Nam,” Ron said.

“We had our moments, good and bad,” Travis admitted. “You ever ask Gunny about what happened over there?”

“Yes, and just like you, he said ‘ask Travis,’” Ron said.

“I guess that I might as well tell you, but don’t tell Sandy or Julia,” Travis said. “We just came off a patrol where we’d gotten shot up pretty good. Anyway, we pulled some liber-ty and Gunny and I headed for the local cathouse for a drink and you know. Anyway, we

got drunk out of our minds and the next thing we know, we're buck naked and the broads are gone. There must have been 30 Marines at the place and those broads were VC. They spiked our drinks and stripped every one of us."

"So, what did you do?" Ron asked.

"What could we do?" Travis said. "We got into formation and marched our naked asses back to the camp. Counted cadence the entire way. Sort of gave a whole meaning to the expression every swinging dick."

"I can see why Gunny and you never wanted to talk about it," Ron gasped, tears streaming down his cheeks.

"Maria is starting Kindergarten, next year, huh?" Travis said.

"Yeah, sure growing up fast," Ron said.

The Gordian Knot – Chapter 9 – My Name is Murphy

At 0800 January 2, 2010, Beijing time, 1500 PST January 1st, the Chinese launched a massive attack on the US. They were joined by the Koreans, who attacked Alaska. This was an attack that no one had expected. “There is considerable uncertainty in published estimates of the size of the Chinese nuclear weapons stockpile. In the late 1980s it was generally held that China was the world’s third-largest nuclear power, possessing a small but credible nuclear deterrent force of 225 to 300 nuclear weapons. Other estimates of the country’s production capacities suggested that by the end of 1970 China had fabricated around 200 nuclear weapons, a number which could have increased to 875 by 1980. With an average annual production of 75 nuclear weapons during the 1980s, some estimates suggest that by the mid-1990s the Chinese nuclear industry had produced around 2,000 nuclear weapons for ballistic missiles, bombers, artillery projectiles and landmines.”

Supposedly, North Korea didn’t have any nuclear weapons. However, “In a roundtable discussion with the United States and China in Beijing on April 24, 2003, North Korean officials admitted for the first time that they possessed nuclear weapons. Furthermore, North Korean officials claim to have reprocessed spent fuel rods and have threatened to begin exporting nuclear materials unless the United States agrees to one-on-one talks with North Korea. They had one ‘failed’ test and a second that worked.

“Tensions between the United States and North Korea have been running especially high since, in early October of 2002, Assistant Secretary of State James Kelly informed North Korean officials that the United States was aware that North Korea had a program underway to enrich uranium for use in nuclear weapons. Initially North Korea denied this, but later confirmed the veracity of the US claim. In confirming that they had an active nuclear weapons program, they also declared the Agreed Framework nullified.”

(It’s pretty hard to get actual 2010 figures in 2004, for some reason). All of which leads me to speculate just how many whatever’s everyone had. I’ll tell you one thing... the US had reissued those nuclear tipped cruise missiles to the SSGN’s and the Virginia class submarines. Although they scrapped the Peacekeeper missiles, they were running a bit behind on de-MIRVing the Minuteman III’s. All of which added up to the US having just a few more weapons than anyone thought.

There were 4 of the Ohio class SSGNs, each with 22 tubes carrying 7 tomahawk missiles each. “The W80, designed by Los Alamos, is deployed in air-launched and sea-launched cruise missiles. Approximately 350 nuclear SLCMs were produced, and all remain in storage. NRDC estimates that a total of 400 W80s are currently deployed to arm ALCMs. NRDC also estimates that the W80-1 stockpile includes a total of 1,400 warheads remain in stockpile associated with the 900 ALCMs that are in storage with their warheads removed.

“A nuclear weapon system consists of a delivery vehicle, a nuclear warhead, and those components (facilities, support equipment, procedures, and personnel) required for its

operation. The surface launched Tomahawk Land Attack Missile-Nuclear (TLAM-N) weapon system on board a ship includes a BGM-109A-I cruise missile with a W80-0 nuclear warhead, deck mounted armored box launchers, a weapon control system, and a mission planning system.” (See what I mean about dated information?)

$22 \times 7 \times 4 = 616$. $24 \times 3 \times 14 = 1,008$. $250 \times 3 = 750$ and $250 \times 1 = 250$. $616 + 1,008 + 750 + 250 = 2,624$ missile-delivered nuclear warheads. $20 \times 16 = 320$ B-2 delivered B-83 1.2 MT weapons. As I said, the former nations of China and North Korea thought that they could surprise the US. Close, but no cigar. Everyone else just sat back and watched the exchange; there was no way they were getting involved. Not just no, but hell no, they weren't getting involved. On the other hand, once China and North Korea expended their inventories and died, what was to keep the other countries from coming to the US and lending a hand?

The US only used a portion of its weapons. And, there were all of those spare W80 warheads and a whole bunch more B-83 bombs, not to mention the B-61 bombs. That should cover that question very nicely. Why use the MIRVd Minuteman III missiles when the single warhead version did the trick adequately. And, there was such a thing as overkill, how dead could people be? So, none of the SSGN's launched any missiles and only 4 of the SSBN's did. Which is all besides the question, isn't it? Some of my readers seem to assume that there's never any progress and if in 2004 the Chinese nukes had a CPE of 1-mile, for example, that in 2010 they were still just as inaccurate.

Ahem, nothing stands still. Not then, not now and not tomorrow. Can you spell New York Minute? That's how fast things change! The fly time on one of those Chinese missiles might be as much as 40 minutes; it depends on the target and a whole bunch of other things. But, for the sake of argument, since it doesn't make any difference if it's 39 minutes or 41 minutes, let's just use 40 minutes. So, how long does it take to empty out a casino on a busy holiday weekend when the bombs will start landing in maybe 30 minutes? More than 30 minutes, but why would anyone target Jean, NV? Maybe Las Vegas, they could kill a whole lot of people, but Jean, NV? I mean really! Besides, Jean is 20 miles from downtown Las Vegas, so all you really need to do is get behind that football field sized bunker and you won't even get your hair mussed.

Forget to bring your things from the hotel when you bugged out? No problem, everyone is going to be issued a kit with razor, comb, toothbrush, toothpaste, soap, washcloth, towel, and a large bottle of deodorant. Claustrophobic? Just tell them and they'll give you a whole bunch of Xanax. You won't get over being claustrophobic, but you won't care that you aren't. And, wouldn't you know it with record crowds they almost didn't have enough bunks. Ships didn't always have enough bunks either, that's what led to the term hot racking. Or, was that submarines? Both?

*I wake up in the morning and I wonder
Why everything's the same as it was
I can't understand, no I can't understand
How life goes on the way it does*

*Why does the sun go on shining?
Why does the sea rush to shore?
Don't they know it's the end of the world?
Cause you don't love me anymore
Why do the birds go on singing?
Why do the stars glow above?
Don't they know it's the end of the world?
It ended when I lost your love.*

*I wake up in the morning and I wonder
Why everything's the same as it was
I can't understand, no I can't understand
How life goes on the way it does*

*Why does my heart go on beating?
Why do these eyes of mine cry?
Don't they know it's the end of the world?
It ended when I lost your love...*

*Don't they know it's the end of the world?
It ended when you said Good-bye.*

Thank you Skeeter Davis. Encore! Or maybe the world ended at 0840 Beijing time on the morning of January 2, 2010. Give or take a couple of minutes. Not everyone got into the shelter in time, but they at least made it into the warehouse and that was good enough. Employees of The Gordian Knot were stationed to pass out blue (men), pink (women) or Red (children) kits and the people were hustled below. Every effort was made to keep families on the same floor, but as sometimes happens, people got separated and it took the security forces to sort everything out.

Ladies and Gentlemen and children of all ages, my name is Travis Dean and I will be your host for at least the next two weeks, Travis announced over the PA system. Through the planning and foresight of your host casino/hotels, you are now in a shelter that has the capability to sustaining the life of everyone aboard for up to a year. Some of you may recognize my name. I am one of the Phoenix Survivors. This facility has accommodations for 3,920 people or approximately 130% of the estimated capacity of the Gold Strike and Nevada Landing. A separate, but connected, facility exists for the employees of my company. Our staff will endeavor to meet your needs and we will be serving meals in your dayrooms where you are now assembled 3 times a day. Each person has been provided with a kit containing essentials that you will need for your stay. While we cannot meet all of your requests, we will attempt to meet all of your needs.

For those of you on prescription drugs, he continued, we can supply an appropriate substitute or the actual drug depending upon our supplies. There are registration forms on each table, please fill one out for each member of your party. We will be dispensing

medications based on that information. If you suffer from claustrophobia, please so indicate and we will supply a sedative. What? Thank you. I've just been informed that the radiation level outside the shelter is now in excess of 500 Roentgens/hr, a lethal dose. This shelter is constructed in such a way that it has shielding equivalent to 18' of compacted earth in the warehouse you entered through. There is an additional 2' of concrete between the warehouse and the shelter making the total shielding equivalent to 21' of compacted earth.

If you have any requests, please indicate them on the registration forms, Travis continued. If we can meet those requests, we will. However do not assume that we can. The casino/hotel where you were staying will be billed for your lodging and meals and they will be billing you individually. There is one more thing. My company provides Executive Security services and all of our security personnel are either Special Forces or retired police officers, mostly the former. These people have express instructions for dealing with any problems that might arise and I would advise you to avoid causing any problems at all costs. Thank you.

"I don't know that that covered everything, but it was a start," Travis said to Gunny. "What's the situation outside?"

"Las Vegas or Nellis took a hit so you can write off the Gulfstreams. The choppers made it down here to Jean and were just setting down when the nuke went off," Gunny read from a clipboard. "We got the choppers hangared with the F-5's and buttoned up. I think that we can expect considerable fallout from the west coast, but most of it will either be to our north or south. We are actually better off here than we would have been in Mesa by a big margin."

"Thanks Gunny. Jim what's the deal with our people?" Travis asked.

"We turned down assignments for the holiday period so everyone was here," Jim said. "We have our full complement of personnel. How do you want them equipped?"

"Have the floor staff armed with pepper spray and Tasers," Travis said. "Have the quick response teams armed with MP5's and .45 autos. Take half of the quick response teams and make a pass through all of the dayrooms so our guests will know we mean business. After that, keep all of the weapons here in the first shelter after you return."

"The wind turbines have been locked down since we got the news of the incoming strike," Ron said. "Do you want us to release them to generate electricity or not?"

"There's been enough time for the US to retaliate and the Chinese and North Koreans to respond if they were going to, Ron. Go ahead and release them. We don't want to get into our diesel fuel supplies any sooner than necessary."

Ron picked up a phone and dialed 3 digits connecting him to the control room in the basement of the E & E (Survival) School.

“Go ahead and release the wind turbines,” he said and hung up.

They gathered the registration forms and made copies. The copy went to their clinic for preparation of the prescriptions and the originals were sorted into piles according to the person’s listed occupation. The crowd included 24 peace officers. It also included some people who listed a food service related occupation. When the sorting was done, Travis got back on the PA system.

Ladies and gentlemen, we have reviewed the registration forms and our clinic is putting together all of your prescriptions, Travis stated. We will be distributing those as they are ready. I would like to speak to several of you personally, please identify yourself to one of our security officers when your name is called.

He then proceeded to read off the names of the peace officers and the food service workers. He told them that it would only be a brief meeting and was nothing to be concerned about, that nothing was wrong. When the people were all assembled in the day room of shelter #1, Travis addressed them as a group.

“Several of you are peace officers and the remainder has listed a food service occupation,” he said. “We have a few more guests than we planned on, but there is plenty of space. We also have extra space in our shelter. I can not only offer you accommodations in our shelter, but temporary employment, if you are interested.”

“What would we have to do?” one man asked.

“We could use extra people as floor staff,” Travis explained. “Floor staff, as you may have noticed, is equipped with pepper spray and Tasers. We could also use help in our kitchen preparing meals for all of our guests. We could also use help delivering the meals and clearing away after. It would be up to you to help us find those additional people, perhaps members of your own family. Your accommodations and meals will be no charge for you and your family and we will pay you the same rate as our entrance level employees earn. Talk it over among yourselves and I’ll be back shortly for your decision.”

“What are you doing, Travis?” Jim asked, “There are enough accommodations for those people and we have enough security staff.”

“I thought that if the floor staff were part of their group instead of ours, it might avoid trouble,” Travis said. “We really could use some help in the kitchen, though. Do you understand?”

“Makes sense to me,” Jim agreed. “With 24 peace officers, they can work 4 on and 20 off and the other five guys can back up the first one if we have a problem.”

The phone rang and Ron picked it up. “I see,” he said, “Go ahead and shut it down.”

“Travis we lost one wind turbine but we should still be okay and not need to go to the backup generators just yet,” he explained. “We were generating extra capacity during daylight and the batteries are full charged, so we’re good.”

“Even if we have to kick in a generator it won’t be a big deal,” Travis agreed. “There are eight units and I doubt our demands will ever require all eight. What is the communications situation?”

“Total blackout for the moment, Travis. It could be the radiation or no one left alive, there’s no way to tell,” Ed explained.

“That would be a kick,” Gunny butted in. “I can just see it now, us being the only people alive in the US. Bull crap, it’s just radiation or everyone has his or her head down.”

“Worst case scenario plus a nuclear winter doesn’t see all of the people dying,” Ron said, “But they might have wished they did. There are people alive out there and looking at this fallout map I got off the net suggests that fallout won’t hit large areas of the US. Oregon, southern Idaho, Wyoming, northern California and Nevada, northern Arizona and New Mexico and parts of the southern states should be in the clear. I agree with Gunny.”

“What will be, will be,” Travis said. “Let’s just keep our guests happy for the moment. I’m going to see what those people decided.”

“Ok people, is everyone in?” Travis asked.

Everyone nodded yes and Travis told Jim to take the peace officers and fill them in. They could then get their families and move to the first shelter. He told Ron to introduce the others to the kitchen staff and then send them for their families. During the night, they lost a second wind turbine, forcing them to start 2 backup generators, one for each turbine lost. When they lost a third turbine on the next day, they locked down all of the turbines and went to back up generators and pv exclusively. They could run for a long time on the generators and the pv panels were keeping the batteries charged for the moment. However, the panels must have been accumulating fallout because their output was diminishing, even during the daylight hours.

It took about a week before they had their first problem. It shouldn’t have happened, everyone was served exactly the same ration and it was reasonably closely measured. But somebody thought that someone else got more and a shouting match turned to a shoving match and the floor staff guy couldn’t get close enough to use either the Taser or his pepper spray.

Quick response team to level 3 (1-4 starting from the top), Travis said over the PA. The team moved with a sense of urgency because if it got out of hand, they could lose control. The sight of 24 burly men armed with sub machine guns was like Moses parting the

Red Sea as people hustled to get out of the way. The two guys who had started it all were taken to the warehouse and slapped into separate cages. Well, they were nice cages, galvanized and everything! The radiation level in the warehouse was only 15 mR/hr, not even enough to get excited about. 15 mR/hr times 24 hours would only equal 360 mRad, but the security people left the CD V-700 sitting there clicking away.

After 24 hours the two people were returned to the shelter and assigned to levels 2 and 4. The cops assigned to floor staff on levels 1 and 3 had been sent up to retrieve them. So between the two fighters' horrifying stories and the reports of the cops about the clicking V-700 they didn't have any more problems until they got to 14 days. You know and I know that 360 mRad in 24 hours won't even make you sick, but if anyone of those people in the shelters knew it, they kept it to themselves. Apparently some of the people knew about the Seven/Ten Rule and on the 14th day, the anxiety levels rose in anticipation of their getting out of the shelter.

This is Travis Dean, Travis said. Our floor staff informs me that a lot of you folks are getting anxious about getting out of here. Currently, the outside radiation level is 1.5 Roëntgens per hour. We are going to keep you inside until the outside level is down below 0.1 Roëntgens per hour. At 0.1 Roëntgens per hour, the anticipated death toll is zero, but at 0.15 Roëntgens per hour, it increases to 5%. We anticipate 3 additional weeks at most and more likely 2. Thank you for your continued cooperation.

"It would be better to keep them as long as possible," Gunny advised.

"Agreed, but we're between a rock and a hard place here Gunny," Travis pointed out. "We don't have enough cages to lock them all up so about the best we can do is wait and see how far the radiation level comes down. Where can they go, anyway? They can walk back to the casinos but their cars won't run. We can MOPP up, maybe, and check out Vegas and see if we can find any running diesel busses, but that doesn't seem likely. We're probably going to need to sell or give them some food and transport them by the pickup load to wherever they want to go so long as the radiation isn't a problem. There may be a few thousand gallons of diesel fuel down at the service stations in Primm, but we can't exhaust our fuel supplies making individual deliveries. Besides, most of them are probably from LA and I'd bet that LA is toast."

"We can't just let them leave without being properly equipped to survive, Travis," Ron objected.

"I thought of that, Ron, but what would you have me do?" Travis asked. "We can't arm them all and I have no intentions of giving them all of our food. We can maybe give them 2 weeks' worth of food, tops."

"How about we check out Ft. Irwin, Travis?" Gunny suggested. "We might be able to find an M16 and some ammo for every family."

“Fire up two of the choppers and send a bunch of people down there to check that out,” Travis ordered. “Ron you know Ft. Irwin so I guess you’re in charge.”

“Ok, I know where all of the weapons are stored; do you want me to bring anything back for us?” Ron asked.

“If we don’t steal it someone else will, so take all five choppers and scramble the F-5’s for CAP to cover your butt,” Travis replied.

“Now, we’re getting somewhere,” Gunny said. “I’m going along Ron, just to offer suggestions.”

“Sure Gunny, the more the merrier,” Ron acknowledged.

They ended up finding more than they could haul in a single trip back from Ft. Irwin. There weren’t any soldiers there, they had apparently bugged out or been assigned to go somewhere. They found some busses and 5-ton trucks in the Motor Pool and stole them, using them to carry the loot. At least that solved part of their problem. Eventually the radiation was down to 0.1 Roëntgens per hour so they let everyone out of the shelter and used the busses and trucks to transport them back to the casinos.

After they dropped everyone off, the trucks returned to the warehouse and they transported enough food for everyone for 3 weeks plus about 1,300 of the M16’s. Travis wasn’t bashful about presenting the casinos with his bill all carefully itemized. There were accommodations for 3,766 people times \$20 times 17 days. Plus 3,766 meals times \$5 times 3 times 17 days. It turned out that the casinos had some sort of arrangement and the Gold Strike paid his bill of \$2,240,770 in cash. They told the casinos that they’d be back the next day and start transporting people as close as they could get them to wherever they wanted to go. They also had one M16, 7 magazines and 500 rounds of 5.56 ammo plus enough food for 3 weeks at no extra charge. Anyone with nowhere to go could let The Gordian Knot staff know and they would see what they could work out, but there were no promises being made.

The Gordian Knot – Chapter 10 – TSHTF or TEOTWAWKI?

The short answer is yes. Seems like a fair question, after all for many it was TSHTF and for the remainder TEOTWAWKI. Kind of depended on where you lived, didn't it? Now, if you lived in one of those areas that didn't get any appreciable fallout, your next big question was, "Was Carl Sagan right?" Carl Sagan was the scientist who claimed that in an all-out nuclear exchange so much dirt and would be thrown in the atmosphere and so much smoke created by all of the fires that a condition would arise where the sky was darkened for a number of years.

The darkened sky would block the sunlight, causing lower temperatures and a shortened or non-existent growing season. And, if there were too much carbon dioxide, it could theoretically create a mini ice age while Mother Nature readjusted the balance of things. The Nuclear Winter theory had been reevaluated, and the scientists found that Sagan, et al., had perhaps overstated their case. But, the thing about it was you could never be certain who had been right.

And then on the KI4U website there was that article about trans-Pacific fallout that suggested that radioactive fallout from China and North Korea could travel $\frac{1}{2}$ ways around the globe and add more fallout to the United States. I guess the moral to that story was that if you were going to get into a nuclear exchange, make it with someone in the Southern Hemisphere. Except, how many nuclear powers were there in the Southern Hemisphere? A man who had lost both of his hands could count them on his remaining fingers – that's how many, at the moment.

Got seed and water to try and grow food? Walton Feed, being in Idaho, might still have some, but UPS wasn't making any deliveries. The point is, after the nuclear exchange it was too late to prepare and you most certainly couldn't find much to buy. But, who would be buying anything after an all-out exchange? People that somehow managed to survive would more than likely resort to looting to get what they needed. So, I expect the real answer to the question would be TEOCAWKI, at least for many, many years to come. And, you got a couple of million of cash on hand? So what? All the stores are closed.

You also have to figure that an enemy was going to target a lot of the military installations in addition to the larger cities. It is somewhat common for members of the military to take leave around the holiday season, too. So even if that soldier, sailor, marine or airman survived, he or she was probably a long way from his or her unit and his or her soldier equipment. And those folks that had stayed at his or her installations were probably out there somewhere trying to help people who had survived.

Jean, NV isn't that far from Ft. Irwin and a few miles beyond Ft. Irwin is that supply Depot in Barstow. What might be in demand after a nuclear exchange? Guns, ammo, magazines, other weapons, running diesel vehicles and food as in MRE's? So, assuming you survived and you have a cadre of ex-special forces types and some stolen Army trucks plus some fighter aircraft to run a CAP or a BARCAP, what would you do if you

were a civic-minded American with all of those resources? Nah, you wouldn't go to that Marine Corp Logistics Base, Barstow and help yourself, would you? Really? Yeah, so would I.

I'd distribute those survivors. Then the ones who stayed behind and I thought were trustworthy could join forces with my staff of trained killers and we'd salvage those supplies from that Depot before the bad guys got their hands on them. Just doing my civic duty, I assure you. I would go to great lengths to avoid hurting anyone, too. Otherwise they might label my group as an outlaw band of killers. But, that's only me, what would you do? Sure, we have room in the truck, grab a rifle and some ALICE gear and don't forget that ammo, just in case.

Yes, I realize that it would be easier to just move down to Barstow and take over that Depot, but I have this really nice place up in Jean. And, after making some repairs on our wind turbines, we got those back on line and we didn't need to run our generators any more. Food? We had a one year supply for 4,000 people and they weren't even here 3 weeks, wait make that 6 weeks, we gave them some to take with them when we hauled them where they wanted to go. Yes, of course we can resupply our medical supplies; they couldn't have looted all of the drugstores so soon. No, no tanks or armor, we're more of a light, quick reaction type of force. But, just in case anyone else has some armor, we'll take some of those Hummers with those TOW missiles and we'd better have some .50 caliber machine guns and LAW rockets and those AT-4's. Those bad guys might just steal a tank and come after us.

M203's, grenades, lots and lots of ammo, better we have them than those bad guys. We'll take some mines while we're at it. Say, it might just be a good idea to take fuel for our fighters and choppers, what was it they used, JP-4 or JP-5? Skeeter Davis said it was the end of the world when some guy stopped loving her and I suspect that those Chinese had stopped loving us Americans sometime on the morning of 2Jan10. I told you it was the end of the world. Europe stayed out of it, but they got their share of that cloud. It was trans-Atlantic fallout plus later on some of that trans-Pacific fallout. No of course they won't invade the US of A. It wouldn't be worth taking for a while, would it?

Of course, we're going to have a problem with the food chain with all of that Cesium and Strontium lying around. I heard that if you had soil rich in calcium the plants would go for the calcium and not absorb some of that bad stuff. So, maybe after we've ripped off the Barstow Logistics Base and cleaned out the drugstores and some of those other stores with valuables like camping gear and Coleman fuel, etc. we'll go back up to Jean and grade off that contaminated topsoil and start thinking about planting crops when it's time. There ya go, we'll grow our own food.

The Marine Corps Logistics Command is comprised of three major components-- MCLB, Albany, Georgia; MCLB, Barstow, California; and Blount Island Command, Jacksonville, Florida. Generally speaking, MCLB, Albany furnishes supplies for Marine Corps forces east of the Mississippi and to forces, which are part of the Atlantic Fleet. We at Barstow support Marine forces west of the Mississippi, the Far East and Asia,

while Blount Island Command provides logistical support for the Marine Corps' Maritime Prepositioning Ships and the Norway Geo-Prepositioning programs.

The base is comprised of three principal sites: Nebo, which encompasses 1879 acres and functions as base headquarters and is the main facility for administration, storage, recreational activities, shopping, and housing functions; the Yermo Annex encompasses 1859 acres and is primarily a storage and industrial complex; and the third site, 2438 acres, serves as our rifle and pistol ranges.

Marines. The Few. The Proud. The Nowhere to Be Found.

"Ron, I'm going to gut both of our training facilities and use the space for storage," Travis revealed. "Concentrate your salvage efforts on food, individual weapons, mobile crew served weapons and replacement supplies for our F-5's and choppers. Once we've taken everything that will be of use in this aftermath, we'll do what we can to get it to people who survived and can use it. Another thing I want you to keep an eye out for is fuel. It's going to be hard to come by in the future."

"We don't have facilities to store much fuel and we don't have large supplies of stabilizers," Ron pointed out.

"We'll hit all of the auto parts stores and marinas we can find," Gunny announced.

"You want us to leave notes and inventories of what we take?" Ron asked.

"I don't think so, this isn't like the last time, Ron," Travis said. "I don't think we're going to have merchants showing up after they get the power restored. No, no notes or lists."

MCLB Barstow ships most of its supplies by train. It was like turning a kid loose in a toy store with an unlimited line of credit and a semi to haul things off. They were very selective because they only had so much storage space. And, in that part of the country, there weren't towns every 5 miles that they had to avoid. They hunted around and found tankers of fuel abandoned. The MCLB had some trailer-mounted generators, well hell, they had everything.

Gunny suggested that they reconnoiter Las Vegas. If the nuke hit up towards Nellis AFB, some of the stores might be intact. It turned out that not only had Nellis been the target but also it was a smaller warhead than they thought. Therefore, when they went to 1600 S. Boulder Highway in Henderson, they found the Camping World store relatively intact. Why is that important? Camping World is a PRI-G/PRI-D distributor, that's why it is important. And, I'll just bet that Travis wanted to kiss Gunny when he reported back that their Gulfstreams at McCarran hadn't all been destroyed. The avionics were shot, but the planes were intact. On the other hand what use is a plane if the avionics are shot?

The people spent from late January 2010 until early spring salvaging everything that was of any use to them. Not all of those guests were totally stupid, either. Those 24 peace officers were from the greater LA area and they'd talked it over and decided that there was nothing to go home to. They'd escaped the devastation caused by the San Pedro bomb, but they suspected that most of LA was nothing but a wasteland. In fact, about 800, give or take, mostly the people with kids and some of the older folks asked to stay on.

With an abundance of labor, their salvage operation went very smoothly. They found a road grader and used the blade to scrape off some of that contaminated topsoil (sand), ran irrigation lines and planted a rather large garden using a mixture of hybrid seeds they'd recovered from stores and some of their precious heirloom seeds. Anyone of fighting age (15-45) was given an abbreviated version of the Survival School and taught to use weapons. Housing wasn't an immediate problem and once they'd removed all of the excess bunk beds, they were able to erect cubicles for the families. They cleaned off those solar panels and the electrical output jumped, but in the twilight of Sagan's Nuclear Winter, they didn't get full power from the panels.

The truth was that, "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times." Dickens had described it well in *A Tale of Two Cities*, his novel about the French Revolution. If you survived, it was both of those things. And survive they did, those Americans; eventually calls were picked up on the Ham radio and the people at The Gordian Knot in Jean, Nevada knew that they weren't alone. Gunny and Ron tried to tell you that people; didn't you listen?

"W0EYO, come back, this is KD6GDQ, over," Ron urgently spoke into the microphone."

"W0, must put that guy in the Midwest," someone suggested.

"Not necessarily, they don't change your call sign if you move," Ron said. "W0EYO, this is KD6GDQ, over."

"KD6GDQ, this is W0EYO, what is your 20, over?" the radio answered.

"W0EYO, our 20 is Jean, Juliet-Echo-Alpha-November, Nevada, November-Echo- Victor-Alpha-Delta-Alpha, over."

"Roger, Jean, Nevada. My 20 is Elko, Echo-Lima-Kilo-Oscar, Nevada, November-Echo-Victor-Alpha-Delta-Alpha, over."

"I sure wish we had a better signal," Ron observed. "There's so much background noise I can barely make this fella out."

"Use ten-codes," someone suggested.

"Which set?" Ron snapped.

“W0EYO, what is your status, over?” Ron asked.

“FUBAR, Foxtrot-Uniform-Bravo-Alpha-Romeo, over,” the voice replied.

“Roger FUBAR, can we help, over?”

“Affirmative, coming to Jean, out.”

“So, who is coming to Jean?” Gunny asked. “Maybe we just invited the bad guys.”

“I guess we won’t know until W0EYO gets here, will we?” Ron agreed.

“Who is W0EYO?” Travis asked entering the communication shack.

“Our first radio contact with the outside world,” Ron explained. “Whoever it is, is on their way here. Give me that HamCall CD-ROM and, I’ll look the guy up.”

“It says here,” Ron said looking at the computer screen, “That the call sign belongs to some guy named Murphy in the Elko, Nevada area.”

“I hope whoever he is that he doesn’t show up,” Gunny laughed, “I’ve had all of Mr. Murphy and his Laws that I can take.”

“The odds are that this Murphy guy will either be coming down state 278 or US 93,” Travis said consulting the Nevada map. “Scramble 4 F-5’s, 2 for each route and try to find him. Launch a chopper and steer a course due north. If the jets locate him, the chopper can divert.”

“Sure, but why all the fuss over one guy?” Ron asked.

“He’d be pretty secure in the Elko area so there has to be a reason why he’d come down here,” Travis explained. “I want to know what the reason is.”

“Ok, Gunny, grab your gear and get me one 4-man team in full battle-dress,” Ron said. He picked of a microphone and contracted the tower at the Jean Airport. “Preflight 4 fighters and 2 choppers,” he instructed. “If we’re going to do this, let’s do it right.”

“Roger,” Gunny said heading out the door.

“That’s almost 500 miles to Elko so we’re probably going to have to stop in Ely and re-fuel,” Ron observed.

“What’s available in Ely?” Travis asked.

“According to this book, Jet Fuel A,” Ron replied. “We’ll get by and if we have a problem, we’ll call you and you can fly up some fuel.”

Ron left and donned his ALICE gear and got his Super Match. Gunny also had a Super Match and the 4-man team was armed with MP7’s and M1911’s. The 4-man team got in one chopper... they carry 6 passengers, and Ron and Gunny in the other. They departed well before the fighters. The F-5 fighter can carry enough fuel in its wing tanks to give it a range of 1543 miles, more than enough for a quick trip up towards Elko.

“Optimized for the air-to-ground role, the F-5A had only a very limited air-to-air capability, and was not equipped with a fire-control radar. The F-5B was the two-seat version of the F-5A. It was generally similar to the single-seat F-5A but had two seats in tandem for dual fighter/trainer duties. The F-5 was originally designed as a daytime, air-to-air fighter, but it has also been extensively used as a ground-attack aircraft. Photoreconnaissance versions of the F-5 have also been produced. Armament for the air-to-air combat role consists of two 20-mm cannons and two Sidewinder missiles. Radius of a typical air combat mission with this armament and external fuel tanks is 375 miles, and average mission speed is 541 miles per hour. In the ground-attack mode, about 7000 pounds of external ordnance may be carried.”

You could also hang a bunch of fuel tanks off the wings instead of bombs, of which they now had a small supply from Barstow. This greatly extended the range of the F-5A, but limited its usefulness to those 20mm cannons in the nose and the Sidewinders. “Loads could include four air-to-air missiles, Bullpup air-to-surface missiles, bombs, up to 20 unguided rockets, or external fuel tanks.” Well, someone forgot to tell those retired military mechanics that they couldn’t arm those aircraft any way they wanted and they hung 2 Bullpups and one fuel tank on each plane. Some Bullpups were still in service, usually in ground attack training programs and guess who had some?

“Rescue flight this is Seeker One,”

“This is Rescue flight, go ahead,” Ron replied.

“We have a pickup pulling a camper just south of Currie. This could be your boy,” the pilot informed him.

“Roger pickup with camper just south of Currie, ETA 10 minutes, orbit, out,” Ron instructed. “Seeker Three, join Seeker One south of Currie.”

“Seeker Three,” was the reply.

Then minutes later, give or take, the chopper with the 4-man team settled in front of the pickup about ½ mile and disgorged the team. They took up positions on either side of the road after setting flares and the chopper took off. The chopper with Ron and Gunny hovered just above and behind the flares. The pickup screeched to a halt and a man got out with a 30-30 rifle.

“W0EYO, this is KD6GDQ,” Ron said over the chopper’s loudspeaker. The man laid his rifle on the ground and the 4-man team quickly surrounded him and picked up the rifle and patted him down. There were 2 children and a woman sitting on the front seat of the pickup and they appeared to be scared to death. Ron ordered the fighters to RTB and Rescue One and Two to land.

“What’s your name?” Ron asked.

“Ralph Murphy, W0EYO, just like I said,” the man replied.

“Do you have any ID Ralph?” Ron asked.

“Nevada Driver’s License good enough for you?” Ralph asked.

“Sure, why were you bugging out of Elko?” Gunny asked.

“Some kind of sickness going around and the food was running short,” Ralph explained.

“What kind of sickness?” Ron asked.

“Well, it starts out sorta like that SARS virus, then gets worse and you die from it,” Ralph explained further. “We ain’t got it if that’s what you’re worried about. We stayed away from people and when I got my radio repaired and up and you were the first guy I talked to.”

In general, SARS begins with a high fever (temperature greater than 100.4°F [$>38.0^{\circ}\text{C}$]). Other symptoms may include headache, an overall feeling of discomfort, and body aches. Some people also have mild respiratory symptoms at the outset. About 10 percent to 20 percent of patients have diarrhea. After 2 to 7 days, SARS patients may develop a dry cough. Most patients develop pneumonia.

The main way that SARS seems to spread is by close person-to-person contact. The virus that causes SARS is thought to be transmitted most readily by respiratory droplets (droplet spread) produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes. Droplet spread can happen when droplets from the cough or sneeze of an infected person are propelled a short distance (generally up to 3 feet) through the air and deposited on the mucous membranes of the mouth, nose, or eyes of persons who are nearby. The virus also can spread when a person touches a surface or object contaminated with infectious droplets and then touches his or her mouth, nose, or eye(s). In addition, it is possible that the SARS virus might spread more broadly through the air (airborne spread) or by other ways that are not now known.

In the context of SARS, close contact means having cared for or lived with someone with SARS or having direct contact with respiratory secretions or body fluids of a patient with SARS. Examples of close contact include kissing or hugging, sharing eating or

drinking utensils, talking to someone within 3 feet, and touching someone directly. Close contact does not include activities like walking by a person or briefly sitting across a waiting room or office.

“We have to be sure, Ralph,” Ron said. “Gunny, get me some of those N-95 masks. Ralph, never mind the Driver’s License, how much stuff do you have?”

“A little food, my rifle and some clothes is all,” Ralph replied.

“Anything you can’t live without?” Ron asked.

“No sir,” Ralph replied.

“You, your wife and kids put on those masks and get into our chopper,” Ron directed, “We’ll get your rifle and leave everything else behind. Gunny, mask up and tell those pilots to mask up, too. Then, let’s get to Ely and refuel these choppers.”

Fortunately for them, there was a fuel truck sitting on the ramp at Ely and it was full of Jet Fuel A and still ran. They quickly refueled the choppers and headed back to Jean.

Authors Notes:

As I sit here composing this, two songs come to mind, ‘One Tin Soldier’ and ‘The Morning After’. Lines like, *in the bloody morning after...* and, *there’s got to be a morning after...* come sort of leap out at me. So far as an all-out nuclear exchange goes, it is possible but not probable. Not when you can use a little bug in a bottle and leave the enemy’s country intact. China seems to be the home of a lot of those bugs like SARS anyway.

Alpha Bravo Charlie Delta Echo Foxtrot Golf Hotel India Juliet Kilo Lima Mike November Oscar Papa Quebec Romeo Sierra Tango Uniform Victor Whiskey X-ray Yankee Zulu

I know that W0EYO is a real call sign and I used my call sign for Ron.

The “Airwolf” helicopter was a Bell 222. The Bell 222 helicopter only has one door. Among the extensive modifications made to the chopper for the series was the addition of a second door. I used the 430 in this story because it looks like “Airwolf” to me and is a 6-passenger corporate helicopter.

The Gordian Knot – Chapter 11 – Bless You

*Listen children to a story
That was written long ago
About a Kingdom on a mountain
And a townfolk down below.
On the mountain was a treasure
Buried deep beneath a stone
And the valley people swore
They'd have it for their very own*

*Go ahead and hate your neighbor
Go ahead and cheat a friend
Do it in the name of Heaven
You can justify it in the end
There won't be any trumpets blowing
Come the judgment day
On the bloody morning after who...
One tin soldier rides away*

*So the people of the valley
Sent a message up the hill
Asking for the buried treasure
Tons of gold for which they'd kill
Cam an answer from the kingdom
With our brothers we will share
All the secrets of our mountain
N' all the riches buried there*

*Now the valley cried in anger
Mount your horses
Draw your sword
And they killed the mountain people
So they won their just reward
Now they stood beside the treasure
On the mountain dark and red
Turn the stone and which beneath it
"Peace on Earth"
Was all it said*

*Go ahead and hate your neighbor
Go ahead and cheat a friend
Do it in the name of Heaven
You can justify it in the end
There won't be any trumpets blowing
Come the judgment day*

*On the bloody morning after who...
One tin soldier rides away*

*Go ahead and hate your neighbor
Go ahead and cheat a friend
Do it in the name of Heaven
You can justify it in the end
There won't be any trumpets blowing
Come the judgment day
On the bloody morning after who...
One tin soldier rides away*

One Tin Soldier was originally released by The Original Caste. In the movie *Billy Jack*, Jinx Dawson of Coven was hired to sing the song.

The security guys had patted Ralph down before they knew that there existed the possibility of his being ill. They were put on Cipro and isolated, as were Ralph and his family. Neither Ron nor Gunny had gotten closer than 6' to Ralph so the nurses suggested that they were all right, but take some Cipro anyway, just in case. Use of antibiotic prophylaxis's is controversial, but a common practice. Especially when you get the Cipro so cheap.

So the good news is that they don't have whatever "it" is and the bad news is that "it" is up in Elko killing people. I always thought the Chinese were so patient and scornful of us occidentals because we weren't. Say you don't suppose it was the Chinese that exploded those bombs in Washington, San Pedro and Palo Verde do you? Nah. But maybe they planted that SARS like virus just in case they didn't kill everyone in the country off. That kind of thinking could, perhaps, be very oriental.

"What kind of bug is this?" Travis demanded to know.

"He said that symptoms were like SARS but that it killed you," Ron paraphrased.

"SARS kills you," Travis said.

"Not every case does," Ron insisted.

"Why did you bring them back here if they were sick?" Travis asked.

"Because he said that they weren't sick and I believed him."

"Lighten up Travis," Gunny said. "I was there and I'd have done the same as Ron."

"What do these people have to offer?" Travis asked.

"Well, they brought a .30-30 rifle," Gunny was becoming amused.

“Yeah and he had a box of cartridges for it,” Ron picked up where Gunny left off.

“I guess maybe I am overreacting a little,” Travis said. “What else do you know about this Murphy fella?”

“He’s an electronics repairman,” Ron said. “At least that’s what he told Gunny and me on the ride back.”

“A radio repairman?” Travis repeated what he’d thought he’d heard. “Well, it’s better than nothing I suppose.”

“Actually, it’s a bit more than a radio repairman, Travis,” Ron said. “Our Mr. Murphy is a FAA certified avionics repairman.”

“Does that mean that he can get our Gulfstreams back in the air?” Travis asked, dumfounded.

“Said he was a troubleshooter for Gulfstream before he moved to Elko,” Gunny added. “He said something about Gulfstream being a repair station and authorized distributor for major avionics manufacturers.”

“Well, if he can repair my jets, get him the hell out of isolation and up to McCarran,” Travis said.

“Aren’t you afraid he’ll infect everyone?” Gunny asked.

“You said he wasn’t sick, so get him to work,” Travis said.

“Me thinks this is the strange case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde,” Gunny muttered under his breath.

The good news was that Mr. Murphy could repair the avionics and get the Gulfstreams flying again. The bad news was that he needed parts and they weren’t available. Travis was determined to find those parts and he sent them back down to Barstow to see what Murphy could find at that Supply Depot. There were many cases of avionics repair units at MCLB, Barstow, even some for those military versions of the Gulfstreams. In a case of making do with what you have, Mr. Murphy, Ralph to everyone but Travis, got all of the systems up and running on the jet transports. Remember, the military uses the VC-4 (Gulfstream 100 and 150), VC-11 (Gulfstream 200), VC-20 (Gulfstream 300, 400 and 450) and C-37A (Gulfstream 500 and 550). And, I’ll bet that you thought that all the Marine Corp was good for was kicking the Jap’s butt on Iwo Jima and Tarawa. Barstow was the answer to most of their problems, regardless of the nature of those problems. Except, even the Marine Corp couldn’t turn up the sunlight and their crop yields for 2010 were far below expectations. Some of those people that they dropped off came stum-

bling or driving back, usually in a diesel-powered vehicle and rarely in a car with a gasoline engine. The latter were usually very old model vehicles.

“So, Ralph, was it hard to get those Gulfstreams of Travis’s running?” Gunny asked.

“How long does it take to switch out a set of black boxes Gunny?” Ralph’s eyes twinkled, “But don’t tell the old man that, he thinks I’m a miracle worker. It’s a real shame we couldn’t get some of that military JP-5, some of it is very safe and already stabilized.”

“I know but we can pump out all of the tanks at McCarran so we’ll have plenty of fuel for a while,” Gunny noted.

“Well, if we run out there, there are lots of airports around Lake Meade,” Ralph said. “What I don’t understand is why Travis didn’t house his jets at Henderson Executive Airport.”

“The reason that I didn’t base those Gulfstreams at HEA was the altitude density problem,” Travis said entering the room. “You have all of my planes running?”

“Yes, Mr. Dean,” Ralph said. “They’re fully operational and fueled up ready to use.”

“Thank you Mr. Murphy,” Travis said.

“Call me Ralph,” Ralph said, “I guess you’ve earned the right. Did I understand you right? Do you really want me to be in charge of your entire aircraft maintenance program?”

“If you want the job,” Travis acknowledged.

“I’ll take it, thank you,” Ralph said.

“Welcome aboard, Ralph,” Travis smiled. “Gunny run Ralph through the short course and get him fully equipped. Ralph, what do you want for a weapon?”

“I don’t suppose you’d have a semi-auto M14 lying around would you?” Ralph asked.

“I have M1A’s in every model SA makes, what’s your preference?” Travis said.

“Ralph will take a Super Match, fully equipped,” Gunny interrupted. “I’ll get him set up with CMI magazines, Black Hills Ammo and a Tac-Force vest.”

“Fine, issue it, Gunny,” Travis said, “Say has anyone thought about getting more double or triple wide’s. We’re about 300-400 houses short.”

"We have the extra equipment to upgrade the septic system for 400 more homes," Ron announced. "There are plenty of wind turbines and solar panels in warehouse #3, but I'm not sure about more Cummins generators."

"Check out Vegas, first and Barstow second, Ron," Travis suggested. "Jim would you or Ed get some of your people grading for the additional homes? And have someone scout for a portable concrete batch plant and a couple of ready mix trucks. And, I suppose if we add more generators, we ought to add more diesel storage, so look for tanks. If you find enough, we'll up the storage capacity for jet fuel down at the airport."

"You want we should start hauling JP-5 in from Barstow?" Gunny asked.

"If you add addition jet fuel tanks, yes, of course." Travis said. "Ok guys, let's make it happen."

"Hold on a minute, Travis," Gunny said, "What are we going to do for houses?"

"I've been thinking about that Gunny said and it's going to be pretty hard to come up with a lot of double and triple wide's," Travis replied. "There might be some used ones in the Vegas suburbs we can dismantle and bring down here and reassemble. On the other hand there have been a lot of homes sitting abandoned down in Phoenix for several years now. Maybe we should send a flight of fighters down there and do a fly by."

"That won't take long," Ron said, "It's only about 320 miles. What are we looking for?"

"First, see if the city got hit in this war," Travis said. "I'm betting that no one bothered to waste a missile on it. If I'm right, have the pilots check out those storage areas where the mobile home dealers had those double and triple wide homes stored prior to delivery. Third, if it's still there and the radiation level is acceptable, we can tow them up here."

"If we're going to get involved in a long range moving operation," Gunny said, "I want we should get some of those LAVs out of Barstow."

"LAVs?" Travis asked.

"Yeah, Light Armored Vehicles. They are 8x8 wheeled light armored combat, combat support, and combat service support vehicles," Gunny explained. "They sort of look like a light tank. Got a 25mm chain gun and a couple of 7.62mm machine guns. Three man crew, commander, driver and gunner."

"Sounds a lot like the Stryker's that I saw at Ft. Irwin," Ron said. "They have a crew of 2 and can carry a 9-man squad, with equipment."

"So, if we go to Phoenix, get some of both," Travis suggested. "But for now, let's just find out if we're going to Phoenix."

“Gunny and I will go to the airport and have a visit with the pilots,” Ron suggested. “We can tell them where to look and what to look for.”

“We could fly the Gulfstreams down there, if everything works out and drive back a fleet of diesel pickups,” Travis said. “We have plenty of 12 volt batteries, don’t we?”

“Yeah, but the tires and hoses will all be rotted off,” Gunny said.

“We can look for new tires and hoses stored inside Gunny,” Ron said. “It takes 2 things to cause a tire or hose to dry rot, ozone and ultraviolet light. The ones that are stored inside should be out of the light.”

“If we go, fuel shouldn’t be a problem,” Travis said, we left a lot sitting at the ranch.”

This was an interesting development; go to one nuclear wasteland to get stuff to survive living in another nuclear wasteland. The hot zone in mid-Arizona had been basically sealed off after the detonation at the Palo Verde Power Plant. Phoenix had been a Mecca for the snowbirds and the mobile home dealers were usually heavy on inventory of their most popular models. So chance favored they’re being able to drag back a lot of single, double and triple wide trailers, providing Phoenix hadn’t been hit. Apparently the Chinese read the papers, too or listened to CNN. Phoenix was a ghost town and intact.

The LAV-25’s had a range of about 400 miles, while the Stryker’s could only manage about 330. They got 8 Stryker’s and drove them down to Barstow where they were refueled. The problem was that Barstow was 100 miles further from Phoenix than Jean was. So, they had to transport extra fuel, just to get there. There were decisions to be made, too. Did they get the homes first or the vehicles first? The priorities were about equal; they had living quarters in the shelter so they got the vehicles first. The stabilized fuel out at the ranch was still good, and there was a PRI distributor in Phoenix. Once they had new batteries in the pickups and had replaced the tires, belts and hoses, they ran just fine. The first caravan was pickups and it stretched for at least a mile.

They didn’t run into a single living soul the first trip down to Phoenix and Travis sent his Gulfstreams down to Phoenix Sky Harbor airport with extra drivers. Interestingly, there was a lot of diesel fuel in the Phoenix area and it could be restored to useable with an application of PRI-D. When they brought the pickups back, they had the back ends filled with all of the spare parts and extra tires they could find. Hauling those mobile homes would prove to be a bigger challenge, because they couldn’t find a lot of the specialized tow vehicles for the homes. Once they got into the swing of things, however, they were pulling in 12 homes every other day. Near Sky Harbor was the McMillan family business and they picked up several Tac-50s.

There had been other radio contracts from around the country, and those people weren’t interested in moving. They were just trying to see who was still alive. It seems that this virus had done what the Chinese had intended. Speculation was that it was an

engineered variant of SARS. The military had done what it could to help survivors, and had been spared the virus for the most part because they were wearing their M-40 gas masks due to the stench. There was wild speculation about the death toll, too. They got figures ranging from 50 million to 250 million.

Phoenix had obviously taken another dose of radiation, probably from the southern California area. And, there were some hot spots they had to avoid, but between the supplies available in the Barstow area, at the 29 Palms Marine Corp training facility and Phoenix, the folks there in Jean had more supplies than they could ever use. The one thing they did was to collect weapons at every opportunity. They had one warehouse containing nothing but weapons and ammunition. If it was issued by the US military and was an individual weapon or a small crew-served weapon, they had it. They found a Cummins dealer in the Phoenix area and picked up the extra backup generators, too.

In something like 6-7 weeks, they had the homes moved to Jean and set up and everyone was finally living above ground. The garden hadn't proven to be too successful, probably not enough sunlight, but they were ok on food. By the fall of 2010, that area near Jean had turned into a thriving little community. They continued to forage, and re-filled the warehouse with food and replacement parts for all of their equipment. They'd run out of some things, of course, like the electrical solar panels, but had found more. Each home would eventually have a solar array on the roof to provide essential electricity and solar heated water. Las Vegas experiences about 300 days of sunshine a year. The sunlight was nearly as bright in the aftermath of the attack and they estimated that they were only getting about 60-70% of normal daylight. Which made those wind turbines all the more important.

"One of these days," Gunny opined, "We're going to get hit by a bunch of survivors looking for an easy way out."

"I agree Gunny," Travis responded, "That's why I have everyone getting all of the small arms from the military installations. If we have them, they can't be used against us."

Authors Notes:

"Consider a few of our recent projects: development and certification of a tail-mounted Infrared Counter Measures system to protect against missile attacks; installation of a five-screen Collins FDS 2000 Electronic Flight Instrument System (EFIS) in a GII cockpit; and the first installation of Gulfstream's new Enhanced Vision System, providing head-up display of outside terrain in total darkness." I was close.

Some people claim that Robert Louis Stevenson was being autobiographical with his book, although some also claim that Stevenson was writing about a real 'Master Criminal' and not himself.

The Gordian Knot – Chapter 12 – Captain Rogers

With the full effect of the Nuclear winter upon them, they got snow during the winter of 2010-11. Not a lot of snow, but enough to shut down the solar panels. It hadn't stopped the people from working, however and they were locating extra fuel and water tanks and trenching in a fire hydrant system. They picked up a couple of fire engines in a Vegas suburb and built a small building to house the pumpers. That development was turning into your typical community, but it wasn't just any community, it had its own Army and Air Force. They had about 100 ex-special forces on staff and 8 of those F-5A aircraft, plus 6 Bell 430's and 6 assorted Gulfstreams.

There were some of the Cobra AH-1W gunships at 29 Palms and parts at Barstow, so they added the 4 attack helicopters to their fleet. The Cobra is armed with one M197 three barrel 20 mm gun (mounted under the nose with 750 round ammo container) and has under wing attachments for four TOW missiles, eight Hellfire missiles, or one AIM-9L Sidewinder missile. It can also be equipped with Zuni rocket launchers. The range of the chopper is about 300 nautical miles.

When you think about it, it is really hard to imagine what it must be like after an all-out attack on the United States. Not everyone would be killed; they didn't all die at Hiroshima or Nagasaki. And, like those 2 cities, many people would have died in the aftermath from exposure to radiation. Others would have died simply because they were unprepared and even though they had gotten to a shelter of some sort, it had either proved to be inadequate or they didn't have enough food or water or something. More would have died when they came out of the shelters because they didn't have a Survey Meter and had relied solely on the Seven/Ten rule.

And, after all of that, when they thought they had it made, up jumped the devil in the form of a sneeze. Perhaps there was such a thing as being over prepared. If your preparations locked you into a location and you don't have the ability to evacuate, you might still be in trouble. If you didn't allow for the EMP and your area got nuked, you might just be on foot. Remember, not all diesel engines will run after getting hit with a large EMP. So, if you were smart and had an old VW bus, you might be in good shape if you had some spare ignition parts. The next question becomes, where do I go? If you've looked at that map in the 'You Can Survive Doomsday' article at KI4U.com, you already know that in an all-out attack, vast portions of North America have probably been hit and are veritable wastelands.

If you lived in Jean, Nevada in early 2011, you'd already been down to Barstow and up to Vegas and down to Phoenix, salvaging everything that you could use that wasn't nailed down. You'd probably gone to the 29 Palms Marine Corps installation and started to disassemble that solar array, too. And, who knows, maybe you'd gotten lucky and found out about the epidemic that the Chinese, or someone, had started as a backup plan. You'd avoided exposure and taken Cipro as a precaution, but you didn't really know if the Cipro worked or not. If someone had been infected, maybe it did; on the

other hand, if they hadn't, you just wasted those salvaged drugs for nothing and still didn't know anything.

I guess maybe I'm just repeating what I read from that article, but it's worth repeating, isn't it? Because maybe someone would prefer to read fiction rather than going out and reading some dumb article that might just save their life. Anyway, you're prepared and you have transportation, but do you have enough fuel and cash? If you can find additional fuel do you have a way to get it out of the ground? And, if that station owner had a generator and is pumping his remaining supplies of fuel, it won't be cheap and he ain't taking plastic and maybe not even paper money. Assuming that you've got all of that covered, where do you go? Horace Greeley said, "Go west, young man," and that's some darned good advice.

If you've made it this far, it probably means you also have a Ham radio, whether you have a license or not. So, you get on one of the bands and start calling, any frequency will do. And, eventually someone will hear you if you try long enough. Now, once contract is made, the odds favor those people being west of the Rocky Mountains or down south someplace. You might just stay where you are, but there's safety in numbers, right?

"We've been getting a lot of people on the radio looking for somewhere to go," Ron said.

"There's a limit to how many we can support, given our circumstances," Travis replied. "I don't want to sound harsh, but we can't invite people here unless they have something to offer."

"Well, there's a good portion of Wyoming that should be in the clear," Jim said referring to the fallout projection map. "We could suggest that they go there."

"Sure, anywhere but here will be fine unless they have a skill we need," Travis agreed.

"Now that we have that resolved," Gunny said, "I think that Ron should get back down to Ft. Irwin and round up those tanks and ammunition. This community has gotten large enough that we're not really mobile anymore."

"I can maybe get them, but I'm no tanker," Ron said.

"You were OpFor," Gunny said, "I was infantry."

"Yes, I was OpFor, Gunny, but not everyone in OpFor drove a tank," Ron explained. "I was with the OpFor Academy and taught Desert Safety and Survival which covered the characteristics of the desert, such as terrain, wildlife, vegetation, and weather encountered at the NTC. Safety considerations were also covered under this topic. The students received briefings on UXOs, heat and cold injuries, roll over drills, handling of pyrotechnics, and procedures in the event they are lost in the desert. I also taught some E & E stuff."

“When you get the tanks, get all of the Field Manuals and Technical Manuals you can find,” Travis suggested. “If we don’t have anyone who knows anything about that equipment, maybe we can learn.”

“We might be able to get some Arty at Barstow or 29 Palms,” Gunny added. “The Corp uses the M101A1 105mm Light Howitzers, M198 155mm Howitzers and LW155 155mm Howitzers towed by Hummers or MTRV’s.”

“We’ll only get Abrams if some unit was at Ft. Irwin for training,” Ron said. “OpFor was the enemy, remember?”

“We’re going to have a static defense, so let’s just get the arty,” Travis instructed.

About the only profession not represented amongst their midst was that of a physician. Unless they got tanks, and then physicians and tank drivers. They needed a doctor really badly. Understand that the SARS like virus had probably run its course. A virus needs a living host to survive. If there were a living host, say an animal for example, it might grow and spread. Might not be a good idea to eat too much chicken, or was it pork that SARS liked?

“The theory that SARS (severe acute respiratory syndrome) virus infected humans via an animal source is widely supported but the suspected natural reservoir has not yet been found. Experiments with clinical isolates of the SARS virus now show that domestic cats and ferrets are susceptible to infection, and can transmit the virus to previously uninfected animals housed with them. The finding that such distantly related carnivores are easily infected with the virus indicates that the reservoir for this pathogen may involve several animal species. And as domestic cats and ferrets are susceptible to experimental infection, and can pass the infection on, these species might be useful as animal models to test antiviral drugs or vaccine candidates.”

“Are you aware that colds, flu, and most sore throats and bronchitis are caused by viruses? Did you know that antibiotics do not help fight viruses? It’s true. Plus, taking antibiotics when you have a virus may do more harm than good. Taking antibiotics when they are not needed increases your risk of getting an infection later that resists antibiotic treatment.”

Did you know that you are a lot better off with a cannon than a tank in some situations? A tank cannon has a range of maybe 4,000-meters, but a 155mm Howitzer has a range of almost 14 miles and with rocket assisted projectiles, over 18.5 miles. And, we’re talking about effective range, not how far you can lob a shell. Hells, bells, you can blow them up before they even get to Nevada. “The M712 Copperhead projectile was the first smart artillery round ever developed. Its accuracy is measured in centimeters, and its lethality is impressive. Copperhead is a cannon-launched, 155mm artillery projectile, which guides itself to a laser-designated target. The munition is capable of defeating both armor and point targets at ranges of over six kilometers, and provides the battle-

field commander with the unparalleled capability of utilizing artillery to the same effect as direct fire weapons and close air support.”

“The M982 Excalibur is a 155 mm extended range guided artillery shell developed by Raytheon Missiles Systems and BAE Systems Bofors. It is a precise GPS-guided munition capable of being used in close support situations within 150 meters (490’) of assaulting troops.” It entered service in 2008 and runs about eighty thousand per round.

Why am I writing this story, it’s never going to happen! The November 29, 2004 *Jerusalem Post* agrees wholeheartedly:

An al Qaeda attack on the US with non-conventional weapons is virtually “inevitable,” and the organization is likely “tying up the knots” for such an attack, Yossef Bodansky, former director of the US Congressional Task Force on Terrorism and Unconventional Warfare, told *The Jerusalem Post* on Sunday.

“All of the warnings we have today indicate that a major strike – something more horrible than anything we’ve seen before – is all but inevitable,” he said.

Bodansky, here for the second annual Jerusalem Summit, an international gathering of conservative thinkers, added that “the primary option” for the next al-Qaida attack on US soil would be one that would use weapons of mass destruction.

“I do not have a crystal ball, but this is what all the available evidence tells us, we will have a bang,” Bodansky said.

He said that al Qaeda has not carried out a second major attack on the US until now for internal psychological and ideological reasons, but after the reelection of President George W. Bush, it has gotten “the green light” to do so from leading Islamic religious luminaries, as well as from “the elites of the Arab world.”

According to Bodansky’s reading of Osama bin Laden’s mind-set, after the elaborate attacks of 9/11 there was no need for the “bin Laden’s of the world” to carry out a second major attack in the US, both because the target audience of the attacks – the Arab and Islamic world – had gotten the message that America could be penetrated, and because a second attack would necessarily have to be more grandiose.

Following the attacks and the US-led war on terror, a debate started within the operational arm of the organization over the potential use of weapons of mass destruction, Bodansky said.

If, in pre-9/11 days, the theme used by bin Laden was that perpetual confrontation and jihad against the US was the only way to protect Islam, the argument now used is the ability to punish American society, Bodansky said.

“Just as the West was challenging the quintessence of Islam by means of the globalization era, there was a parallel need by Islamic extremists to strike at – and hurt – the core of American society, this time with weapons of mass destruction,” Bodansky said.

A subsequent theological debate emerged within the organization, and its supporters in the Arab world, he said, over whether the mass killing of innocents is permissible.

While bin Laden and his associates argued that by virtue of their participation in US democracy, US citizens were enabling their rulers to fight, other Islamic luminaries contended that this does not permit such massive attacks, Bodansky said. The reelection of Bush in November, he said, was viewed by bin Laden and his cohorts as a decisive answer to this deliberation, with Americans now “choosing” to be the enemies of Islam. In bin Laden’s mind-set, he said, the stage was set for a non-conventional attack.

Bodansky said that while there may still be some vestiges of debate and doubt within Islamic circles, he believes that planning for such an attack is finished. “They got the kosher stamp from the Islamic world to use nuclear weapons,” he said.

Moreover, Bodansky said that America is losing the war against terrorism, noting the number of recruits bin Laden is able to count on, as his call to arms gains widespread support throughout the Muslim world.

In the pre-9/11 world, Bodansky said, jihadists could count on 250,000 individuals trained and willing to die, and 2.5 million–5 million people willing to help them in one way or another. He cited intelligence estimates from this summer that suggest that as many as 500,000-750,000 people are willing and trained to die, 10 million are willing to actively support them, short of killing, while another 50 million are willing to support such a movement financially.” Never happened, the WTC fell down because of a structural defect, all by itself.

Just make your way to Jean, Nevada, we have lots of everything and we’ll be glad to share as long as you can contribute too. And they came and no one was turned away, because that would be un-Christian. It’s one thing to say that you’ll shoot your neighbor to keep him or her out of your shelter, but when it comes down to pointing the gun you realize that 1) he’s your friend and, 2) he may end up helping you out. So, you slice the meat a little thinner and you make do. Ever see that Twilight Zone show about the bomb shelter? It was the 3rd show of the 3rd season and called, oddly enough, ‘The Shelter’.

And then, the Army showed up.

“I’m Captain Ray Rogers and I’d like to speak to whoever is in charge,” the Captain said.

“That would be Travis Dean,” Ron said. “Is there a problem?”

“I’ll explain it to this Dean fellow,” the Captain said.

A few minutes later...

"I'm Travis Dean, what can I do for you?" Travis said.

"I'm Captain Ray Rogers and I've been sent to help you people," Capt. Rogers explained.

"We're getting along quite well Captain Rogers, so if it's all the same to you we'll pass on your assistance." Travis replied.

"You don't seem to understand, Sir, I'm not asking you IF we can help you," Capt. Rogers remarked abruptly, "I'm here to move your people to a relocation camp so you can get good and proper medical treatment."

"Do you have a doctor with you?" Travis wanted to know.

"No, Mr. Dean, but there's one at the camp," the Capt. replied.

"Where is this relocation camp?" Travis asked.

"29 Palms Marine Corp Training Center," Rogers said. "There isn't any power there, someone stole the solar array."

"Really? I wonder who could have done that." Gunny asked.

"Who are you Sir?" Rogers inquired.

"Don't call me Sir, punk, I'm a retired Gunnery Sergeant," Gunny growled.

"And, I'm afraid we're going to have to turn down your offer Captain Rogers," Travis said firmly. "We have everything we need here including electricity."

"I'm not giving you a choice Mr. Dean," Rogers insisted.

"I'm giving you one Captain," Dean replied. "You can leave or become permanent residents in our cemetery."

"I've got a company of men with me Dean, you don't stand a chance. Give it up before someone gets hurt," Rogers purred.

"I've got 100 ex-special forces plus 500 more people armed to the teeth," Travis smiled baring those alligator teeth.

"I...I...I," the Captain stuttered, "I can call in air power."

“We’ll shoot them down with Stinger missiles.”

“I can bring in tanks!”

“We’ll wipe them out with our 155mm Copperheads, Excalibur projectiles or TOW missiles.”

“Captain, we cleaned out Ft. Irwin, MCLB and 29 Palms almost a year ago,” Ron butted in. “We had our own fleet of fighter aircraft before TSHTF as part of our security business. No disrespect (Gunny laughed) but why don’t you go help some people who need helping?”

“Do that Captain, I don’t feel like digging no fricking graves,” Gunny added.

“I’ll leave, but you be hearing from me again,” Rogers threatened.

“Ron, how many bombs do we have for our attack fighters?” Travis asked.

“Enough to wipe out 29 Palms,” Ron replied slowly, catching Travis’s drift.

“You do what you have to Captain and so will I,” Travis announced and left the room.

The Gordian Knot – Chapter 13 – A War, Sort Of

It seemed that no sooner did the folks in Jean overcome one problem than they were faced with another. This time they had told the Army Captain to leave or they'd bury him and his command. Those were ill considered fighting words. Admittedly, they could take out that Company of soldiers without difficulty, but a Company is part of a Battalion and a Battalion is part of a Regiment, which is part of a Division. And, a Division has a lot of soldiers in it, about 15,000. A Captain commands a Company, probably a Major or Lt. Colonel a Battalion, a Bird Colonel a Regiment and a Major General a Division. And, the higher up one gets, the more political it becomes. Lieutenants lead most platoons, and the second-in-command is generally a Sergeant First Class. The Pentagon link shows the command structure of the US military forces.

"Hey, we've got a problem," Gunny said.

"Only one?" Ron asked.

"I'm serious here," Gunny persisted. "We need to consolidate our aircraft. We should bring the Gulfstreams down from McCarran. Our runway is 10,000'. Anyone have the facts on McCarran?"

"I have them," Travis said. McCarran International Airport, Las Vegas, Nevada:

Airfield Data:

Latitude: 36° 04' 49"

Longitude: 115° 09' 06"

Acreage: 2,800

Elevation: 2,170 feet msl

Runways:

25R - 7L: 14,505 feet

25L - 7R: 10,525 feet

19L - 1R: 9,770 feet

19R - 1L: 9,770 feet"

"Can we fly the Gulfstreams out of there?" Ron asked.

"With the marginal temperatures, sure we can, Travis said. "Say Gunny did you pick up any radar gear at MCLB?"

"Got 2, Travis," Gunny said. "Got an AN/TPS-63 and a G/ATOR."

The AN/TPS-63 is a Marine Corp L-band Search Radar that provides input to the Tactical Air Operations Module (TAOM) used by the Marine Air Control Squadron. The Corp had also acquired a high mobility, high performance, multi-role, Ground/Air Task Oriented Radar system, (G/ATOR).

“Are they set up and operating?”

“Nah, they’re still in the shipping containers,” Gunny said. “I’ll get with Ralph and see if he can help us get them up and running.”

“Do that and shake a leg, I don’t know how long it’s going to be until Captain Rogers comes back,” Travis instructed.

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“Yes Captain, I understand you had a problem?” Lt. Col. Al Clark said.

“Colonel, there’s a large group of people up in Jean, Nevada,” Rogers reported. “There must be close to 1,000 of them. Over the course of the last year, they’ve been out looting and claim they cleaned out Ft. Irwin, MCLB Barstow and 29 Palms. They’ve got a solar array, so I’m guessing that’s where our array went. Anyway, they ran me out, and told me to go help someone who needed help.” (Readers Digest version)

“I see Captain. Ok, I’ll take it under advisement,” Clark said.

“Bob (Colonel Robert G. Young, Commander of the Regiment), Al Clark,” Clark spoke into the phone, “Got a minute? Yes sir, 1100 hrs. Thanks.”

“A thousand people, huh? And, they’re all equipped with US military gear?” Young confirmed.

“Yes sir, and from what Capt. Rogers says, they have artillery and fighter aircraft,” Clark reported.

“Move your Battalion up to that dry lake south of Primm and go have a talk with the Dean fella,” Young directed.

“What are my orders?” Clark asked.

“Check them out. If they don’t present a problem, we aren’t going to start anything with them,” Young said. “We’ve got enough dead Americans. But, if you think they’re a problem, take them out.”

“They’ve got about a Battalion sized group, but we’ve probably got better training,” Clark agreed. “Yes sir, I’ll get the Battalion mobilized.”

Now, if I’d have been that Regimental Commander, I’d have told my Battalion Commander to get his ass on a Blackhawk and fly up to Jean and have a visit with those people. There was always time to mobilize the Battalion IF they turned out to be the bad guys. But, fresh from some fights with some other bad guys, Colonel Young wasn’t in

the mood to fool around. So, they mounted up the 5 Companies and headed for the Ivanpah Dry Lake that was mostly in California, right at the state line. It was a journey of about 250 miles.

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In Jean, they'd moved the Gulfstreams and had both radar units set up. They also had all of that artillery positioned, primarily to repel a force from the south. The radar operators had immediate returns once the radar was operating. Mostly slow moving aircraft, helicopters according to the operator, in the area of Ivanpah Lake. Then, one morning about 2 weeks after the encounter with Captain Rogers, the radar control room notified the command center that they had an inbound chopper. It took all of about 3 minutes to go from a slightly elevated alert status to condition red. The chopper landed right in front of the warehouse that looked like a bunker and 2 men exited the craft, Col. Clark and Captain Rogers.

"Captain Rogers, what brings you back so soon, need a place to lie down?" Gunny asked. "We have a backhoe."

"This is my commanding officer, Lt. Colonel Al Clark and he would like to speak to Travis Dean," Rogers replied.

"Colonel, follow me please," Gunny said. "Sorry gentlemen, I'll have to have those sidearms."

The Colonel was quick to give up his M9 and seeing the Colonel yield, Rogers didn't have much choice except to go along. Gunny led the two men down to the C & C in shelter #1, via shelter #2. The Colonel was getting an eyeful and from what he could see, a Battalion wouldn't be enough men.

"This here's Lt. Colonel Al Clark, Travis," Gunny introduced the men. "You already know the punk."

"What can I do for you Colonel, care for some coffee? Must have worn you out flying in from Ivanpah Dry Lake," Travis said.

"You have radar, too?" Clark asked.

"The finest the US Marine Corp had in its inventory," Travis replied.

"I'll take the coffee, thanks, black," Clark said. "My mission here is to check you folks out and see if you present a problem."

"We won't take trouble to anyone Colonel Clark, but if trouble comes looking, we'll be ready," Travis said. "We can field a little over 3 companies of people trained by ex-special forces personnel. We have Surface to Air missiles, artillery, fighter aircraft with

Air to Surface missiles, helicopter gunships, radar, and more ammunition than you do. We are not looking for trouble.”

“I see,” Clark acknowledged. “What do you want?”

“We want to be left alone,” Travis said, “Nothing more and nothing less.”

“My orders were to check you out and if you didn’t present a problem, to leave you alone,” Clark shared.

“We could use a doctor,” Travis said. “Would you like a tour of our facilities?”

“Sure, as soon as I finish my coffee,” Clark agreed.

Gunny returned to the Blackhawk and told the pilots that the Colonel was touring the facility and that they shouldn’t get anxious. He stood by too, and struck up a conversation with the pilots, 2 Warrant Officers. He mentioned his 30 years in the Corp, his tours in ‘Nam and slowly pieced together that they were up against a full Battalion, equipped with Apache AH-64 gunships, artillery, MLRS and more infantry than they had.

“What do you think of our operation?” Travis asked.

“Impressive,” Clark said. “We’d almost have to nuke you to dig you out. I haven’t seen anything that suggests that you people present a problem. What can we do to help?”

“We still need a doctor,” Travis said.

“I’ll see about assigning a doctor from a MASH unit permanently, to liaise with you folks,” Clark said. “How are you on medical supplies?”

“We have about everything we need except someone to use them,” Travis said. “We have 2 nurses. We also have SINCGARS communications gear. Our call sign is Golf-Kilo-One.”

“Say where do I know your name from?” Clark asked.

“The Phoenix Survivors?” Travis suggested.

“You folks have been through 3 nuclear events, haven’t you?” Clark asked.

“The San Pedro fallout, the Palo Verde fallout and now this,” Travis acknowledged.

“What are they calling this latest fiasco?”

“It didn’t last long enough to be called a world war,” Clark said. “We wiped out North Korea and China and they chopped the US up pretty good. Some folks call it *The Retribution*.”

"I see," Travis said, "That seems appropriate for 100 years of Imperialism."

"Whatever," Clark replied. "Let's go Captain Rogers; we have to move a whole Battalion of folks back to 29 Palms."

Does anyone know what a career killer is? How about not working things out with some peace loving folks who just wanted to be left alone? Remember the movie 'She Wore a Yellow Ribbon'? Captain Nathan Brittles (John Wayne) retired after a long career still a Captain, right? 30-40 years in the Army and still a Captain. At the end of the movie, they made him Chief Scout with a promotion to Lt. Colonel, but the Army doesn't have a Chief Scout anymore, do they? I wonder what John Wayne screwed up? Gunny gave them their sidearms back when they boarded the Blackhawk. You don't suppose Captain Rogers wanted to eat his do you?

There was still a battle to be fought, but it was with Mother Nature. The winter of 2011-12 saw snowfalls in Jean equal to what they used to get in Elko, according to Murphy. They continued to move fuel out of the MCLB Barstow and store it at the Jean Airport. They had hundreds of thousands, perhaps millions, of gallons of JP-5 for their aircraft. By the way, MapBlast has the best map of the area. If you bring up Jean, NV and select the largest map, and then zoom out one notch, you can see the entire area.

Simply inhaling a saltwater spray could help prevent the spread of diseases including flu and tuberculosis US and German researchers reported yesterday.

They found a saline spray, administered using a device called a jet Nebulizer, reduced the number of germ-spreading droplets by as much as 70 percent for six hours.

The findings, published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, could provide a way to help control epidemics, such as the 2003 outbreak of severe acute respiratory syndrome that spread globally and killed many health care workers trying to help patients.

The findings also might help control any global influenza pandemic, which almost all health researchers believe is coming and which could kill millions.

The researchers noted much more study was needed before a saline spray device could be marketed to prevent the spread of diseases.

Gerhard Scheuch of Harvard University and colleagues there and at biotechnology firms Pulmatrix and Inamed tested 11 volunteers, giving them the oral spray and then measuring how many particles they released when coughing.

Viruses known to spread from humans and/or animals through breathing, sneezing, and coughing include measles, influenza virus, adenovirus, African swine fever virus, foot

and mouth disease virus, Varicella zoster virus (chicken pox), infectious bronchitis virus and smallpox, among others, they wrote.

Bacteria spread in airborne droplets include anthrax, Escherichia coli and tuberculosis.

Mr. Scheuch's team noted some people produced many more little droplets or bioaerosols than others – something also seen by investigators of the SARS outbreak that spread from China to cities around the world, killing about 800 people.

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"I'm glad that we didn't have to fight those guys," Gunny observed. "They had the M270A1 MLRS units with them. They would have never had to leave Ivanpah Lake to blow us to Hell and beyond." Gunny was unaware of the latest double missile pack with one 300km range missile per pack or the air transportable HIMARS.

The MLRS M270 Launcher, a derivative of the Bradley Fighting Vehicle (BFV), is the standard US Army platform for firing surface to surface artillery rockets and missiles. The Armored Vehicle Mounted Rocket Launcher (M270) is a full-tracked, self-propelled launcher/loader designed to launch 12 tactical rockets and re-deploy before enemy determination of launch position (shoot and scoot). The launch platform is also used to launch the Army Tactical Missile System (Army TACMS) and is capable of launching all M270 Family of Munitions (MFOM) tactical rocket/missile variants. The launcher consists of six rockets, each of which are mounted and controlled in both azimuth and elevation. It has an automated control system for aiming that automatically corrects for launcher cant and ambient temperature, a directional reference system to obtain azimuth elevation and cant angles, and a FCS which is operated from a man-rated vehicle cab. The launcher platform structure provides a "self-loading" capability.

The M270 launcher has a maximum speed of 64 km/hour, with a maximum range of 435 km. It is capable of climbing a 60 degree slope and a one meter wall. Ordnance options include the MFOM (all variants of the MLRS rocket and Army TACMS missile). The M270 can load, arm, and fire a 12 rocket ripple within five minutes. M270 launchers are deployed three per battery and 29 per battalion. The M270 launcher can be configured for transport by Air Force C-141 aircraft on a limited basis. The M270 launcher is also transportable by Air Force C-5 and C-17 aircraft. It fires 12 Rockets; 644 M-77 Shaped Charges per Rocket; range 31.8km.

Say, I'll bet that you thought that the Army dumped the M2001 Crusader program, didn't you? Sorry, but no cigar. Ten shots per minute, range 40-50km, with a 25km CEP of 80 meters. It even outclassed the German PZH 2000. Yes, of course Rumsfeld dropped the program, that's history. But, there were possible sales to American allies to consider and maybe United Defense was looking ahead. Now, that's a risky business, looking ahead, consider the F-20 fighter. But, they were so close to having the project completed. The Crusader was envisioned to be the best piece of 155mm artillery in the business.

“In August 2002, Crusader-developer United Defense was awarded a \$27 million contract to begin work on a successor system, which company officials have dubbed the “Objective Force Cannon.” The FCS Non-Line-of-Sight (NLOS) Cannon will probably be a smaller-caliber gun than Crusader. Because of recoil and other factors, it is not feasible to put a 59-caliber 155mm cannon on an FCS-size chassis.” And, you didn’t believe me. Note the use of the word ‘probably’ in the copied material.

“I thought they dumped the Crusader program back in 2002,” Ron said.

“Dumped it in July of 2002 with a big fanfare,” Gunny said, “Quietly revived it in August of 2002 with barely a whisper. Renamed it to the FCS-NLOS. Classified it Secret and the public never knew.”

“I thought they were on our side,” Travis said.

“You were a Marine, Travis, you know how it works,” Gunny smiled.

“Not very well, in my opinion,” Travis nodded. “I would have thought that the UN would have come in and saved the United States.”

“Ain’t no UN, Travis,” Gunny said, “Them pilots was telling me that the UN went up with the rest of New York.”

“What else did you learn from those pilots?” Travis asked.

“Them Chinese dumped everything they had on this country,” Gunny explained. “Wiped out most of it. The scientists are telling the Army that we’re in for 3-4 seasons of Nuclear Winter. Then, as the rain and snow clears up the atmosphere, it will gradually warm up. Some of the government made it to Mt. Weather, but it was attacked, too. What there is left of the government is doing what they can to maintain law and order and trying to clean up the mess. FEMA couldn’t handle it and the Army took over supported by the other branches of the military. The military is setting up relocation centers for people who need them, but if they don’t, they’re welcome to stay where they are. That punk just overstepped his authority, that’s all.”

Authors Notes:

Allow me to tell you something about the Crusader. The engine they developed for the Crusader was a humdinger. My son, the tanker, tells me that what the government should have done was to have taken the Crusader engine and put it in the Abrams tank. They stopped building those gas turbines for the Abrams and some of the engines had been rebuilt 15 times by 2004. Since United Defense has a lot of engineers who can overcome anything, I have allowed them to Adapt, Improvise and Overcome. Although the Crusader program was dropped, the engines never made it to the Abrams, as planned.

The Gordian Knot – Chapter 14 – Where Do You Go From Here?

The cops have tracked you, just because you belted a couple of them. You moved to Phoenix to start fresh and you end up working with the cop who saved your butt and one of the cops you belted. You married a beautiful Paleontologist whose summer dig in Montana and savings allowed you to build a bomb shelter that you never thought you'd need. Then some terrorists blew up 3 nukes and 2 of the 3 forced you to use that shelter 2 separate times. You'd become known as one of 'The Phoenix Survivor's' and you'd moved to Jean, Nevada.

Once there, your stepfather-in-law became more active in the business, The Gordian Knot, and started an Executive Protection Service, TGK, LLC. With a flair for the dramatic, he'd acquired a fleet of 6 Gulfstream jets, 8 worn F-5A Tiger fighters and hired about 100 ex-special forces guys for his bodyguard service. The fighters were refurbished with new engines. And, since he was richer than a pecan pie that made your teeth hurt, he'd gone whole hog building not 1, but 2 bomb shelters, one with 4 stories plus one bombproof warehouse.

And, just when your life was getting easy and all you had to do was run the E & E Training Program, also called the Survival School, the Chinese and North Koreans had attacked the United States. So, you'd taken Clint Eastwood's advice and Improvised, Adapted and Overcame. First of all, you had to put up with almost 4,000 paying guests in the 4-story bomb shelter for 17-days, but you'd done it. Afterwards, you'd started salvage operations, a fancy word for looting, and you'd looted Ft. Irwin, MCLB-Barstow and The Marine Corp Air Ground Combat Center at Twentynine Palms. By the time it was all said and done, you were able to stand up to the Army and back them down. Well, not really, they weren't looking for a fight, but you'd stood up to them.

Only afterwards had you learned that had you taken on the Army, they'd have kicked your butt. Fortunately, that was one lesson you hadn't had to learn. By this time, you were getting to be fairly adept at surviving nuclear explosions. However, you were an Angelino and you'd never had to deal with much snow. Had you been up north, say someplace like Jackson, WY, Floyd, IA, or even Meeker, CO, the snow would be butt deep on a 9' Indian, but in Jean, you could blade it away. Which was good, because you didn't ski. Oh, you knew how to, you just didn't do it. It wasn't going to be a problem much longer, either, only a couple of years.

"A strong continuing interest in improved designs for tactical systems culminated in Livermore's work on the W79 Artillery-Fired Atomic Projectile (AFAP) enhanced-radiation artillery shell in the 1970s. The W79 nuclear warhead design for the Army's 8-inch artillery gun was assigned to the Lab in 1975. The design included an "enhanced radiation" option. The W79 development program led to deployment in 1981. Nuclear artillery shells were part of the US arsenal from the mid-1950s until 1992. The W79 has been scheduled for dismantlement. Before beginning the dismantlement process, numerous activities were completed. As final reviewers, the Nuclear Explosives Safety Study review (DOE) and the Safety Evaluation review (Sandia, Lawrence Livermore, and DOE)

determined that the process could proceed. The Pilot Lot for the W79 dismantlement program began in mid-1998 with the first dismantlement unit completed the first week of June 1998. The remaining Pilot Lot units were completed by the end of September 1998.” Pilot Lots?

“The original WW2 M1 series (which became the M2 with some manufacturing improvements) put a 95lb/42kg HE shell to 25,000 yards/23km while the 8” - also designated M1 and later M2 - fired its heavier 203mm caliber 200lb/90kg shell to 18,000 yards/17km. Both guns were the mainstay of American and allied heavy artillery units and served for many years post-war with US forces as well as being widely distributed to America’s allies.

“After the Second World War the complete weapon was redesignated the Howitzer, Heavy, Towed: 8 in: M115. They were redesignated as M115 for the 8” and this gun was used in its original 25-caliber format in the early model M110 series self-propelled guns. As such it served for many years, with the M115 in towed form being still in service in the 1990s, which shows what a solid and reliable gun it was. It was also capable of firing nuclear rounds. Its 155mm partner was also used for many years, under its new title of M59.”

Did you know that the Iowa National Guard has a whole bunch of those M110 cannons? Say, who was in charge of dismantlement of those W79 shells? Did they ever get past the Pilot stage? If the government were to tell you that they were all dismantled, would you really believe them? The government has a tendency to be a bit less than truthful on occasions, you know. Told us that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction, but couldn’t find them. Maybe Saddam had moved them to Syria, huh? They also assured us that MAD would keep anyone from ever attacking the US in an all-out nuclear war. They seem like reasonable questions.

And, there was that article in the Jerusalem Post. Hey, no problem. Any aircraft approaching US airspace would get shot down and what’s left to blow up anyway? Even Canada got hit by the fallout and they weren’t targeted, except for the backup NORAD site; where was that? Canadian NORAD Region Headquarters at CFB Winnipeg, is responsible for providing surveillance and control of the Canadian airspace. The Canadian Forces Air Command provides alert assets to NORAD.

CANR is divided into two sectors, which are designated as the Canada East Sector and the Canada West Sector. Both Sector Operations Control Centers (SOCCs) are co-located at CFB North Bay, Ontario. The routine operation of the SOCCs includes reporting track data, sensor status and aircraft alert status to NORAD headquarters.

The Alaska NORAD Region maintains a 24-hour-a-day, seven-day-a-week capability to detect, validate, and warn of any aircraft and/or cruise missile threat in its area of operations that could threaten North American security.

With its headquarters at Tyndall AFB, near Panama City, Fla., First Air Force is one of four numbered air forces assigned to Air Combat Command. It has responsibility for ensuring the air sovereignty and air defense of the continental United States. As the CONUS geographical component of the binational North American Aerospace Defense Command, it provides airspace surveillance and control and directs all air sovereignty activities for the continental United States.

Since Sept. 11, 2001, CONR has been the lead agency for Operation Noble Eagle, an ongoing mission to protect the continental United States from further terrorist aggression from inside and outside of US borders.

With the transfer of responsibility for continental air defense from the active duty component of the Air Force to the Air National Guard, First Air Force became the first numbered air force to be made up primarily of citizen airmen. A combined First Air Force command post and CONUS Region Air Operations Center perform the NORAD air sovereignty mission for the continental United States.

First Air Force plans, conducts, controls, coordinates and ensures air sovereignty and provides for the unilateral defense of the United States. It is comprised of 10 Air National Guard fighter wings and three air defense sectors for the Northeast, Western and Southeast regions of the country. The best of America's fighter inventory, the F-15 Eagle and the F-16 Fighting Falcon, are its primary weapons systems. In its role as the CONUS NORAD Region, First Air Force also performs counterdrug surveillance operations.

Say, whoever told you that Cheyenne Mountain couldn't take a direct hit? It was built to withstand a 5 MT blast, given the CEP of the Soviet missiles when it was built. It survived the Chinese missiles just fine. While the government, what there was left of it, was being run out of Mt. Weather, the military was being run out of Cheyenne Mt. The folks in Jean didn't give a red rat's behind where the military was being run from as long as they left them alone.

Sandy was noticing that Ron was consumed with many things and those things didn't seem to permit enough time for her. If they were going to have more children, she needed to get his attention because her biological clock was ticking. There's this thing that some women are known to do to get they're man's attention. Especially clever women have especially clever solutions to the problem. And you didn't get to be a PhD in Paleontology unless you were very intelligent and probably more than a little clever. She soon announced that they were expecting, so whatever she did must have worked. Julia was ecstatic, but no more than Sandy.

Ron was excited too, but he had some natural concern about bringing a child into the world considering what a terrible mess the country was in. But, he was like most other men and the prospect of being a father again overrode any other considerations. The poor garden output of the previous summer had been attributed to the limited amount of

sunlight; but why take a chance? It couldn't hurt to acquire some fertilizer either up in Vegas or down in Barstow, the city not the military installation.

Presuming that they had a relationship with the Army of one of toleration, they concentrated on finding a wider variety of seeds and quantities of fertilizer. It turned out that a dozen or more stores in Barstow sold fertilizers of every possible combination. So, they just took it all and mixed the various combinations together and rototilled it into that sand. The summer of 2012 produced much higher garden yields, but they weren't sure if it were due to the fertilizer or the improved sunlight or a combination of both.

That made them realize that they had another problem, how to preserve all of that produce. The potatoes and onions didn't need canning, but the green beans, corn and other vegetables did. They scrounged up all of the pressure canners, jars and lids that they could find together with a book on canning put out by the USDA. What they couldn't can they froze.

"Maria and Travis are excited that they will have a baby to help to take care of," Sandy noted. "But I think that Maria is thinking that she will just have a live doll. The first time I ask her to change a diaper; she'll figure out that having a baby is a lot of work."

"Speaking of work, do you miss teaching?" Ron asked.

"A little yes," Sandy admitted. "Why do you ask?"

"The kids haven't had a school to attend since the beginning of 2010 and I was hoping that you and some of the others might be willing to set up some sort of education program for the kids," Ron explained. "Carson City hasn't done anything to get the school system set back up."

"I'll see what we can work out, honey," Sandy said, "How about you guys gather up textbooks and any lesson plans and stuff you can find?"

"Sure, be glad too," Ron agreed.

The answer to the question posed by the title of the chapter, *where do you go from here*, was simply that you worked to restore the things that you lost. Now that they had protection and could produce their own food, the next natural thought was to provide for the education of the children. These particular children were about to receive an education that wasn't in any lesson plan they might find in some school. Not only would they be exposed to 'book learning', but they would learn to grow their own food and protect themselves. They weren't going to have PE; they were going to get physical fitness exercises including learning to run an obstacle course. Instead of growing a bean in a cup in a classroom, they were going to plant beans in the garden, cultivate the soil and pick and help can the produce.

They would learn which plants were edible and which to avoid. And there wasn't going to be any artificial grade system. Students would be allowed to learn at their own pace. These young people might not get 1600's on the SAT, but how many Universities were left to attend anyway? And how likely was it that anyone would be giving the Scholastic Aptitude Test? After all, education was to prepare you to live life and the life that they'd be living for the foreseeable future would require the additional skills they were teaching. Things like auto mechanics and electronics and other skilled trades would be taught through On-The-Job training programs.

I didn't realize that getting pregnant was catching, but it must be. Ah, it was those cold winter nights that must explain it. There were so many of the younger wives expecting that the Army doctor was forced to begin teaching midwifery skills to some of the older women. He was only going to get involved in difficult deliveries. Which raises another interesting question. What do you do about marriage? There wasn't a minister anywhere in the group and none of them were authorized to perform marriages under Nevada law. Nevada law doesn't require a waiting period or a blood test, just a license, witnesses and someone authorized to say the words. Travis was the authority in Jean, so he did the honors.

Historically, there was no requirement to obtain a marriage license in colonial America. When you read the laws of the colonies and then the states, you see only two requirements for marriage. First, you had to obtain your parents' permission to marry, and second, you had to post public notice of the marriage (banns) 5-15 days before the ceremony.

Notice you had to obtain your parents' permission. Back then you saw Godly government displayed in that the State recognized the parent's authority by demanding that the parent's permission be obtained.

Give the State an inch and they will take 100 miles. Not long after these licenses were issued, some states began requiring all people who marry to obtain a marriage license. In 1923, the Federal Government established the Uniform Marriage and Marriage License Act (they later established the Uniform Marriage and Divorce Act). By 1929, every state in the Union had adopted marriage license laws.

While Sandy and some of the others made plans to start the school, Ron and Gunny adapted the survival classes to something more appropriate to the age of the kids. This wasn't VMI, or boot camp, but the kids needed to learn discipline, plus a lot of other things if they were to survive in a PAW. They were going to need to learn gun safety and shooting skills and a whole lot of other things. And there were many other 'things' that they needed if they were going to be a totally self-sufficient community. Things like metal lathes and milling machines to produce replacement parts. There were a score of things they needed and every day the list just seemed to grow.

They had a batch plant and hauled in materials to build extra warehouses. The community seemed to consist of homes and those mammoth buildings. Rather than waste

space, they began building the 'warehouses' only 12', one story, high. They could build 2 buildings with almost the same materials as one, except for the extra roof and floor. As the buildings went up, they added solar panels to provided extra electricity.

And, the community grew too, and not just the population explosion caused by the cold winter nights. People started showing up, looking to join. Many of the people that had survived in the shelter back in January of 2010 returned. They'd been equipped with the basics for survival, but it was a cold, hard world out there and coming back to Jean beat the hell out of whatever was in second place. According to them, the Army would provide food and shelter, but there was a price to pay, you had to turn in your firearms for 'safe-keeping', whatever that meant.

By 2014, when the skies had cleared and the temperatures had returned to near normal, the community there in Jean had grown to over 2,000. They had been forced to add additional septic systems and erect additional wind turbines to provide electricity. They couldn't quite find enough additional backup generators to provide for 100% backup power in case the wind stopped blowing and it was night, but between the batteries and everything else, they could manage. They'd exhausted the supply of triple and doublewide mobile homes and were finding it easier just to pull in the large singlewide homes.

"Them Chi-coms may not have defeated the United States, but they did a pretty good job of destroying the country," Gunny observed. "It's been over 4 years since they attacked and I ain't seen no sign of any government being re-established."

"The military has everything cleaned up now, according to Doctor Lewis," Ron pointed out, "I expect that we'll be having elections fairly soon."

"About the only thing we ain't short of is food, ammo and fuel," Gunny said. "If it wasn't for our cannibalizing other aircraft, them Gulfstreams wouldn't be flying. Fuel doesn't seem to be much of a problem; we've got JP-everything."

Aviation turbine fuels are used for powering jet and turbo-prop engine aircraft and are not to be confused with Avgas. Outside former communist areas, there are currently two main grades of turbine fuel in use in civil commercial aviation: Jet A-1 and Jet A, both are kerosene type fuels. There is another grade of jet fuel, Jet B which is a wide cut kerosene (a blend of gasoline and kerosene) but it is rarely used except in very cold climates.

Jet A-1 is a kerosene grade of fuel suitable for most turbine engine aircraft. It is produced to a stringent internationally agreed standard, has a flash point above 38°C (100°F) and a freeze point maximum of -47°C. It is widely available outside the USA. Jet A-1 meets the requirements of British specification DEF STAN 91-91 (Jet A-1), (formerly DERD 2494 (AVTUR)), ASTM specification D1655 (Jet A-1) and IATA Guidance Material (Kerosene Type), NATO Code F-35.

Jet A is a similar kerosene type of fuel, produced to an ASTM specification and normally only available in the USA. It has the same flash point as Jet A-1 but a higher freeze point maximum (-40°C). It is supplied against the ASTM D1655 (Jet A) specification.

Jet B is a distillate covering the naphtha and kerosene fractions. It can be used as an alternative to Jet A-1 but because it is more difficult to handle (higher flammability), there is only significant demand in very cold climates where its better cold weather performance is important. In Canada it is supplied against the Canadian Specification CAN/CGSB 3.23

JP-4 is the military equivalent of Jet B with the addition of corrosion inhibitor and anti-icing additives; it meets the requirements of the US Military Specification MIL-PRF-5624S Grade JP-4. JP-4 also meets the requirements of the British Specification DEF STAN 91-88 AVTAG/FSII (formerly DERD 2454), where FSII stands for Fuel Systems Icing Inhibitor. NATO Code F-40.

JP-5 is a high flash point kerosene meeting the requirements of the US Military Specification MIL-PRF-5624S Grade JP-5. JP-5 also meets the requirements of the British Specification DEF STAN 91-86 AVCAT/FSII (formerly DERD 2452). NATO Code F-44.

JP-6 was a kerosene fuel developed in 1956 for the XB-70 aircraft. JP-6 was similar to JP-5 but with a lower freezing point and improved thermal oxidative stability. The cancellation of the XB-70 program resulted in the cancellation of the JP-6 specification, Mil-J-25656.

JPTS is a special purpose jet fuel developed in 1956 to power the highflying U-2 aircraft. JPTS is an extremely thermally stable jet fuel with a low freezing point to support this type of mission. JPTS, produced to specification MIL-DTL-25524, is still used today in the U-2 and the newer TR-1 aircraft.

The development of the SR-71 in the late 1960s required a new fuel having low vapor pressure and excellent thermal oxidative stability to meet the requirements of high altitude and Mach 3+ cruising. JP-7 is not a distillate fuel like most other jet fuels, but is composed of special blending stocks to produce a very clean hydrocarbon mixture low in aromatics (typically 3%), and nearly void of the sulfur, nitrogen and oxygen impurities found in other fuels. The combustion characteristics are also tightly specified to ensure adequate combustor life. The JP-7 specification, MIL-DTL-38219, was first published in 1970.

JP-8 is the military equivalent of Jet A-1 with the addition of corrosion inhibitor and anti-icing additives; it meets the requirements of the US Military Specification MIL-T-83188D. JP-8 also meets the requirements of the British Specification DEF STAN 91-87 AVTUR/FSII (formerly DERD 2453). NATO Code F-34.

A kerosene fuel very similar to commercial Jet A-1 was developed by the USAF to reduce the fire hazards associated with wide cut fuels, which became apparent during the

Southeast Asian conflict. JP-8 replaced JP-4 as the primary military jet fuel for USAF operations in Great Britain in 1979, and is currently the primary jet fuel for NATO. The USAF completed its conversion to JP-8 in 1995. JP-8 is covered by the specification MIL-DTL-83133 and British Defence Standard 91-87. Although JP-8 has replaced JP-4 in most every case, the potential need for JP-4 under emergency situations necessitates maintaining this grade in specifications MIL-DTL-5624 and Defence Standard 91-88. Since jet fuel was nothing but kerosene, if they lost all power, they could maybe use it for their lamps.

Sandy and Ron named their baby boy Ronald. He came in at a whopping 8lb 4oz. Gunny got to be the Godfather this time around. You would have thought that Gunny, a confirmed bachelor, had been appointed as the Commandant of the Corp. For his first Christmas, Gunny got the baby a set of BDU's in the USMC digital camouflage pattern. What are you going to get little Ron for his second Christmas, Gunny, a M16?

Christmas of 2014 was very memorable; they didn't have any snow. The snow had been a blessing of sorts, melting and moistening the soil. A contingent of troops had cleaned up Las Vegas, but there didn't seem to be any interest in rebuilding the city. It was at this point, in early 2015 that Travis announced that they were picking up the entire community and moving from Jean to Las Vegas. "The advantage," he claimed, "was that it didn't matter where they were and there were certain advantages in Vegas, like the former McCarran International Airport."

Vegas must have looked like it did back when Bugsy Siegel first went there and decided to build the Flamingo. The blast from that nuke up at Nellis had damaged so many of the buildings that the Army had just ended up bulldozing the whole darned town. No one had any idea where the survivors had gone, but it certainly wasn't to Jean. They had to have gone south, north was out of the question and to the east was Lake Meade. The thing about McCarran was that the Army had also demolished the remaining buildings because of the damage they had sustained. It hadn't been enough to topple them onto the Gulfstreams, but they had been judged not to be safe. What Travis wanted were the runways and the underground fuel storage, buildings could always be rebuilt.

"Ron, do you want to be in charge of this move?" Travis asked.

"Not really, no," Ron said, "But I take it you weren't asking?"

"That's right, Ron, I wasn't," Travis said. "Move the airport first and then begin moving the homes."

"Any particular place you want the homes set?" Ron asked.

"Put them between the old 15 and 215, south of McCarran," Travis directed. "That will put a buffer zone on our west, north and east. Once everything is in place, we can see about creating a buffer zone to the south, maybe along Pebble Road."

“Sounds to me like he’s building a walled in community,” Gunny said. “Hell, if there was going to be any trouble, we’d have had it before now.”

“If that’s what he wants, let’s just do it Gunny,” Ron replied, “It’s easier than arguing. Besides, Travis has done all right by us so far.”

“But the dang shelter is right here and I don’t see how he expects us to move that,” Gunny disagreed.

“I think that he expects us to build a new shelter, Gunny,” Ron said.

“I think he’s full of crap,” Gunny said. “It would be a whole lot easier just ta build a new airport than to move the friggin town.”

“If you can talk him into it, I’m perfectly agreeable,” Ron replied.

The Gordian Knot – Chapter 15 – A Question of Sanity

“You darn right I’m going to talk to him,” Gunny thought. “I’ll just reason with him.”

“You lost your friggin mind, Travis?” Gunny asked.

“What do you mean Gunny?” Travis smiled.

“You moving to Vegas ‘cause of some darned airport that don’t have no buildings is what I’m talking about,” Gunny ‘explained’. “You want runways, I’ll build you one 3 miles long. You want underground fuel bunkers, we’ll dig up the ones at McCarran and move them down here.”

“Those three highways will give us some protection,” Travis suggested.

“If all you want is protection, I’ll build a dang wall all around this compound,” Gunny said. “What’s the real reason you want to move?”

“We’re out in the middle of nowhere Gunny,” Travis replied.

“From the looks of Vegas, we’ll still be in the middle of nowhere, have you seen the town since the Army bulldozed everything?” Gunny asked.

“No, but I assumed there was something left,” Travis explained.

“There’s something left all right, sand,” Gunny laughed. “Miles and miles of sand.”

“Do you know how to build an airport?” Travis asked.

“No, but the Army Corp of Engineers does,” Gunny said, “And as far as that goes, so do the Seabees.”

“How are you going to get the Corp of Engineers to build us an airport?” Travis wanted to know.

“I didn’t say they was going to build it, just that they knew how,” Gunny replied. “I’ll hook up with that Colonel, what was his name, Clark wasn’t it? Yeah that’s right, Al Clark. He’ll give me some ideas if you’ll give me half a chance.”

“I don’t want anyone thinking I’m nuts,” Travis said. “Talk to Clark and if you can figure out to build a real airport with a pair of 15,000’ runways, we’ll stay here.”

“You got it partner,” Gunny said.

What Gunny did was something entirely different. He got a few guys to help him and they went up to McCarran. They mapped the airport and took core sample of the con-

crete at various spots. Then, he got a draftsman to draw up a set of plans and took them to Travis.

“There ya go,” Gunny said, “Nothin to it.”

The runways at McCarran were, among others, 25R-7L and 19R-1L. Translated into English that meant that the one runway ran along a line of 70° or 250° if viewed from the other end. A runway with the designation 27R-9L would have run straight east to west. The other runway was just off from being a north-south runway, it being 190° or 10°, depending upon your viewpoint. So, why not duplicate the McCarran runways, but make them a little longer and a trifle thicker? The final dimensions would be 15,000' long by 150' wide by 20" thick and they would be on the same bearing as those at McCarran.

That's more than a little concrete when you think about it, 3.75 million cubic feet of concrete per runway. Let's see, there are 27 cubic feet to the cubic yard so that was almost 140 thousand cubic yards per runway. Plus there were taxi strips to build. All of which Travis was quick to point out. Besides, he said, except for the length of the runways, these plans looked a whole lot like McCarran. Now, if Gunny had duplicated the new runway they put in at Denver back 10 years earlier, he could have gotten by easier. That runway was 12,000' by 150' by 18" inches and only took 100 thousand yards of concrete for the runway. Gunny gave the bad news to Ron.

Well, it wasn't that bad, not really. The homes were 'mobile' homes and intended to be moved, if necessary. They thought about the possibilities for a new shelter. All of the buildings were the same size, 160' by 360' and one possibility was to run them end-to-end. That would create one building when they were done, 160' wide and 2,160' long. It could sit on a basement of the same dimensions. The basement would be dug 18' deep and have a floor and side walls 2' thick. The overhead would be an astonishing 6' of reinforced concrete. That proposal took 108 thousand yards of concrete, only slightly more than one Denver sized runway. The other alternative was to build another of the multi-level shelters under a newly constructed blast proof warehouse. Allowing 12' per story and constructing the shelter 6 stories high meant that the demand for concrete would be reduced to 20,270 cubic yards of concrete for the shelter/warehouse plus 6,400 yards for the 6" slabs under the other 5 warehouses. To give you some perspective of the first proposal, a Nimitz class carrier is 1,092' long by 134' wide.

They opted for the latter proposal and all that was left to do was construct that 4th wall and then pour additional walls on the 3 freeways. Rather than strip the shelter in Jean of all of the equipment, they left the solar panel on the bunker warehouse and left the wind turbines, locked down. New equipment was scrounged from warehouses and dealers showrooms. And, they could always return to Jean if circumstances forced them to abandon Las Vegas.

Someone had suggested that that 4th wall be 14' high and 10' thick. A good suggestion, to be sure, but it was 2-3 miles between the I-15 and the I-215. For the sake of argument, say 2 miles and then think in terms of a wall around the entire compound. No,

think of 2 walls, 6" thick and 14' high, each about 8 miles long. 42,240 times 14 times ½ equals 11,000 cubic yards of concrete per wall, doable but time consuming. If you built the walls 10' apart, you could fill them with some of that sand, there sure was lots of it. It only took 156 thousand yards of wetted and compacted sand, but they were secure now. As long as the 'enemy' didn't have aircraft or artillery, that is. As I was saying, a year later when the construction was finally completed, they were as snug as a bug in a rug. Two additional steel buildings were erected at 'McCarran' providing hangers for the 6 Gulfstreams, 8 fighters, 6 Bells and 4 Cobra gunships. And the radar was moved. A year later put them into the spring of 2016. Time flies when you're having fun.

"That didn't take long," Travis said. "Went quicker than I thought. Plus, we have a back-up bugout shelter. Good work fellas."

"I hope it was worth it, Travis," Gunny lamented, "We had to haul all of those building materials from as far away as Bakersfield and Palmdale. Please don't suggest any more building projects for a while. This compound is 4 square miles in area. We don't even have enough people to guard the walls."

The community had grown to about 2,500 adults and that meant that if everyone manned the walls, evenly spaced, they'd be 17' apart. A person could put a community of 10-12 thousand inside of a 4 square mile area. And still, no bad guys came. But, they did have a half assed election in 2014. It was an off year election and they only filled the empty Congressional seats. Nobody from Las Vegas was willing to enter the race, thus some guy from Carson City ended up representing the community.

Imagine if they'd tried to build those two 15,000' runways. That would have taken 280 thousand yards of concrete. By moving and constructing a new, they only used about 48,670 yards of concrete and that included the walls. They moved the aggregate and cement by rail, eliminating burning tens of thousands gallons of fuel. I don't know what Gunny was bitching about; he got to be the engineer. Conversely, he did have a good point, the community was short a lot of people.

"General Clark, how many people do you have that would be good risks to populate our community?" Travis asked.

"Take all you want, this business of providing shelter for people who can't fend for themselves is a pain in the behind," Brigadier General Al Clark replied.

"We can't just take anybody, General, we only want people who are willing to work," Travis countered.

"I'm afraid that we don't have many of them," Clark responded. "Anyone who was willing to work got the hell out of this place as soon as we got their area cleaned up. I do have about 500 soldiers who we're planning to release from active duty, would they do? There're about 75 women and 425 men, give or take."

“I’ll take them, sight unseen,” Travis said grinning from ear to ear.

“Did you finish up that move from Jean to Vegas?” Clark asked.

“How did you know we moved?” Travis asked.

“Predator,” Clark replied. “We keep an eye on you folks in case you ever need help.”

“That’s good to know, what’s with the promotion to Brigadier?” Travis asked.

“I got moved from the Battalion up to Regiment and then offered to resign,” Clark explained. “Officers are few and far between anymore and it was easier to promote me than to replace me. An irate civilian killed Colonel Robert G. Young the former Commander of the Regiment.”

Brigade-sized units, which are normally commanded by Colonels but may, as in the case of separate brigades, be commanded by Brigadier Generals, control two or more battalions. Their capabilities for self-support and independent action vary considerably with the type of brigade. Maneuver brigades are the major combat units of all types of divisions. They can also be organized as separate units. If you look on the organization chart, a Brigade is similar in size to a Regiment. Now, if Clark was telling it like it was, it was entirely possible in a post-attack country promotions might be given to retain valuable individuals. Captain Rogers was still a Captain.

That SINCGARS radio that they had been given back in Phoenix was an AN/VRC-92A, which included two long-range radios and two power amplifiers. It was capable of long-range transmission due to the power amplifiers. They rarely communicated with the Army down at 29 Palms, but Clark suggested that they establish a regular radio check-in schedule. Up to that point only Doc Lewis used the radio with any regularity. Clark went on to explain that there was a lot of dissatisfaction around the country over the government’s slowness in getting the country ‘back to normal’. Travis and he agreed on a 4-hour check-in routine where they would report one of four conditions: Alpha- situation normal, Bravo-possible threat, Charlie-under attack and X-ray-extreme emergency, as in being overrun. As a result of their ‘borrowing’ from MCLB-Barstow, they now had several of the AN/VRC-92A radios and some of the other models.

Clark went on to say that he’d send a force over to Phoenix and they’d hook onto ‘more than a few’ of those single wide mobile homes and tow them up to Las Vegas. Phoenix was beginning to be reoccupied because it had never sustained much damage. Mostly, the new residents were occupying homes instead of the mobile homes. Clark asked Travis how many mobile homes he could use and Travis had told him a minimum of 1,000.

“Ok guys, I hate to do this to you, but you need to start putting in slabs and utilities for up to 1,000 mobile homes,” Travis announced when he returned from Twentynine Palms.

“We’re still finishing up the gates,” Gunny said. “Oh, all right, Ron and I will get someone on it.”

The gates were an interesting affair. Each of the 4 portals breaching the fence had 2 gates, an inner and outer. The inner gate was hinged on one side and the outer on the other. They were constructed out of 6” pipe and both swing outward. That wasn’t all there was to closing off the compound. In order to get the fill material for between the two fences, they’d run a trencher just outside the outer wall and conveyed the soil up to between the walls. In so doing, they had created a trench that someone had dubbed ‘the moat’. At the 4 portals, the trench had been widened and was a full 24’ wide. You could only cross over ‘the moat’ by a folding drawbridge made out of steel. Hinged in the middle the drawbridge folded, as it was raised forming two layers of heavy armored steel protection for the outer gate. ‘The moat’ was dry. George S. Patton had claimed that fixed fortifications were monuments to man’s stupidity. But, Patton hadn’t lived in a post-apocalyptic America, so what did he know?

1,000 homes with 100-amp service meant another 100,000 amps of electricity at 240v that had to be made available or about 24 megawatts, but call it 30mw. This necessitated a trip down to Palm Springs and the relocation of several of those wind turbines, about 70 of the 350kw units, to be exact. Plus, they had to expand the septic field and dig another well. It was starting to get complicated. The septic system had been built outside of the wall to the south. They’d started it about 10’ deep and only used the necessary amount of grade. Still, it was a huge leech field and ended up being buried very deep at the ends. Unless you knew it was there, there wasn’t a sign of it. The wind turbines were located inside the walls on the south side of the 4 square mile area, while the communication tower was to one side of the compound. Those draw bridges had been quite the engineering accomplishment. They’d ended up using horizontal jack-screws to extend the farthest section. This allowed them to pull the bridge up tightly against the frame around each portal.

“We only have six shelter levels, Travis,” Gunny pointed out. “Since we’re short of bunk beds, we have a problem. Even if we had enough bunk beds, we’d still have a problem. At 980 people per floor for five floors (the sixth was cooking, offices, communications center, medical clinic, etc.) we can only handle 4,900 people maximum. If you’re going to put in another thousand homes, and you figure maybe 2½ folks per home, that’s 2,500 more people. We already have 2,500 adults and over 1,000 children. There ain’t room for everybody in that shelter.”

“How much concrete and aggregate do we have left?” Travis asked.

“We have a lot, why?” Ron intruded.

“Build another 6 floor shelter with a bunker/warehouse on top,” Travis replied.

“Yeah, yeah, I know,” Gunny said, “And then build a tunnel connecting the two, right?”

“That’s right and when you get that one done, start a third,” Travis chuckled. “This enclosure is big enough to house about 12-15 thousand people.”

“Ron, did you know you were going to end up being a construction supervisor when you got out of the Army?” Gunny asked, eyebrows rising.

“Nope, but we’re getting too darned good at it Gunny,” Ron chuckled too. “If we’d have screwed it up like we learned in the service, we wouldn’t be getting stuck with all of these details. I’ll get started on the shelter and you get a crew and start rounding up the equipment we’ll need.”

“Where do I get that?” Gunny asked.

“Well, you could try Los Angeles,” Ron laughed.

“I will, but I’m taking the LAVs and Stryker’s,” Gunny advised.

“Take some semis, too Gunny,” Ron suggested. “Look for generators, plumbing supplies, electrical wiring and panels, more bunks and mattresses plus tables and chairs.”

“Thirty years in the infantry and I end up being a friggin supply Sergeant,” Gunny grumbled. “Ok, you want I should get stuff for both bunkers while I’m at it?”

“Unless you like going to LA, it might be a good idea,” Ron agreed.

Gunny left muttering under his breath. It was something about being too old for this stuff or something like that. He made a list of everything he was expected to find and then added a couple of items of his own, like more PRI-D & PRI-G, medical supplies, and about anything that wasn’t nailed down. They had 8 of the Stryker’s so he could take 72 of the ex-special forces in addition to the Stryker’s crews, a total of 88 personnel. There were 12 of the LAV-25’s with their 3-person crews, making for 124 combatants, not including him. He figured that they might as well take all of the tankers and bring back all of the fuel they could find in 3 categories, gasoline, diesel fuel and jet fuel. They had a fleet of semi tractor-trailers, collected on their many trips around the southwest.

Before he left, Gunny made sure that General Clark knew that he was taking a large force down to Los Angeles for salvage operations. Clark offered a certain Captain Rogers and his Company for protection, but Gunny declined his offer. He figured the punk would just get them killed. They went to Los Angeles the ‘back way’, down I-15 to Victorville and highway 18 to Palmdale where they picked up I-14 and came into LA via the San Fernando Valley. After that it was just a matter of hitting stores and warehouses looking for what they needed. The pickings in the Valley were pretty lean and after they pumped out the recoverable fuel from the Van Nuys Airport, they headed to LA proper.

Initially, they didn't have any trouble; the people surviving in the Valley shunned them, perhaps because of the military vehicles. Coming out of LA, loaded up and hauling butt eastbound on I-10, they came under fire. Six of the Stryker's were equipped with the M2 machine guns and 2 with the Mark 19 grenade launchers. The 12 LAV-25's were equipped with the M242 25mm Bushmaster cannons and 2 7.62x51mm machine guns. Whoever the attackers were, they weren't too smart. The IAVs & LAVs were interspersed with the column of semis and tankers and they swung to the shoulders and laid down suppressive fire. The attackers had originally targeted the drivers of the semis, and several of the cabs had taken hits. The special force's medics treated the living as best that they could, but Gunny decided to contact 29 Palms because they needed treatment much sooner than they'd get if they were hauled to Vegas.

Gunny reached out to General Clark and advised that they had a condition Charlie with dead and wounded. Clark dispatched AH-64's and SAR choppers immediately. The distance was a little over 100 miles and their ETA was about 30 minutes. Meanwhile, the attackers had broken off their assault, they might not be outnumbered, but they were clearly outgunned. They lost 12 drivers or relief drivers, with another 17 wounded and requiring immediate medical attention. These people were airlifted back to 29 Palms and the Special Forces types took over the driving duties.

About 3½ hours after the last injured people had taken off aboard the SAR choppers, the column of vehicles arrived in Las Vegas.

"How did it go, Gunny? Get everything we needed?" Ron asked.

"What I got was 12 dead and 17 wounded," Gunny said. "General Clark sent rescue choppers to Ontario where we got ambushed and they hauled the wounded out to 29 Palms. How about you get one of those choppers fired up and haul my ass down to 29 Palms?" Gunny asked.

"We'll take a Gulfstream, it will be faster," Ron replied. He called the airfield and told them to get the Gulfstream 100 warmed up, Gunny and he would be there in a few minutes. He also told them to contact 29 Palms and get clearance for them to land. The airfield at the 29 Palms Marine Corp installation is described as follows:

Landing Area. The entire landing surface consists of AM-2 aluminum matting. The matting foundation is a highly compacted sand sub-base with soil-cement stabilization.

a. Runway 10/28. Runway 10/28 is 8000' x 150' and is oriented 104 degrees/284 degrees magnetic.

b. Weight Bearing Capacity. Weight bearing capacities are listed in Appendix D. They are also published in the current edition of the US IFR Enroute Supplement.

c. Runway Marking. The runway is marked in accordance with standard NAVAIR criteria. Standard lighted runway edge markers are located at 1000' intervals on both sides

of the runway. Centerline runway lights are at 5' intervals, except for the last 3,000'. The edge lights are white except the last 3,000' (914 m), alternated white and red for next 2,000' (610 m) and red for last 1,000' (305 m).

d. Overruns. There are no prepared overrun surfaces. The terrain slopes down rapidly off both runway thresholds. All areas off the AM-2 matting are unsuitable for aircraft.

Authors Note: Charles City, IA is 4 square miles and in the early 1950's, had a population of about 12,000.

The Gordian Knot – Chapter 16 – Growing Pains & Trouble

It took about an hour to get to the airport and fly to 29 Palms. General Clark was there, waiting to greet them.

“I sure wish you have let me send Captain Rogers to offer you additional protection, Gunny,” Clark said.

“Wouldn’t have made no darned difference General, all of those people got killed or wounded in the first barrage,” Gunny replied. “How are my people?”

“Two of them were DOA, Gunny, I’m sorry,” Clark explained. “I understand that the remainder will be ok in time.”

“I’d sure be grateful if you’d take me to see them,” Gunny said. “We’ll be making more trips to LA, by the way, that place is a scavenger’s dream.”

“Gunny told me that he got everything we need, General Clark,” Ron added. “Travis has us building 2 more shelters in addition to putting in 1,000 slabs for additional trailers.”

“You boys know about the election in November, don’t you?” Clark asked.

“Yeah, but we ain’t represented in Congress except by a guy from Carson City,” Gunny said.

“Don’t you have a couple of lawyers in that bunch of yours?” Clark asked. “You could kill two birds with one stone if you ran them. You’d have representation and have them out of your hair.”

“I’ll mention that to Travis,” Ron said. “I’ll bet he wouldn’t mind having a couple of politicians in his pocket.”

“How are the defenses coming?” Clark asked. “The Predator close-ups look pretty good.”

“We’re ok unless they have artillery or aircraft,” Gunny replied.

“We sent those people over to Phoenix to pick up the trailers, they should be arriving any day,” Clark added. “From the looks of things, you might need those people.”

“What do you mean by that?” Ron asked.

“The government had to complete an interim census so they’d know how many seats there were in Congress,” the General explained. “The initial attack killed something in excess of 100 million people, but no one can be sure. Following the attack, about another 100 million, give or take, died from radioactive fallout. After that, that virus killed

another 10 million. The population of the United States is down to about 90 million, more or less.”

“Dang,” Ron said while Gunny let out a low whistle.

“Where did all of the troops go?” Ron asked. “We didn’t find anyone at either Ft. Irwin or at 29 Palms.”

“They were all out trying to help people, fellas,” the General chuckled. “When they got back to their installations, they found that someone had cleaned them out, lock, stock and barrel.”

“We didn’t get that much stuff,” Gunny protested.

“Better you than the bad guys,” Clark replied, “But you might take it easy on MCLB-Barstow, that’s our principal supply base now.”

“That’s ok, General,” Gunny said, “We’ve got most of Los Angeles left to clean out.”

Ron and Gunny spent some time with the wounded men and had the two bodies placed aboard the Gulfstream 100 to be returned to Las Vegas for burial. There was something in General’s Clark’s tone or question that was unsettling and they rushed to get the second shelter completed. Eventually the 503 newly released soldiers showed up from Phoenix dragging, over the span of 3 trips, 503 used 14’ by 70’ trailers. By the time they returned from the second trip to Phoenix, the first 168 trailers were set in place and connected and had some of those solar panels from 29 Palms installed on top.

Gunny made a second trip to LA and went and returned the back way, avoiding any further engagements with that group in Ontario. Who, I failed to mention, had disappeared by the time the Apaches had shown up. They continued to empty out the fuel bunkers at the LAX and haul it to McCarran. This time they were looking for camping equipment in addition to arms and ammunition. They didn’t come up with many arms and found darned little ammunition; someone had gotten there ahead of them. They also cleaned out as many drug stores as they could find that hadn’t been looted. Even some that had still had lots of non-narcotic drugs, so they did well in that area.

That second tour through the San Fernando Valley had seen people being a little friendlier. They even ended up inviting a select few to move to Las Vegas. The price of admission was a 14’ by 70’ mobile home. They also ended up with 2 truckloads of tobacco products and a truckload of liquor. Most of the people had quit smoking because of the 17 days in the shelter, but there were always a few diehards. They’d cleaned out smoking materials at every location they’d been, but this was the first bonded warehouse that had a large supply. Man, I’ll bet those cigarettes were stale; but take it from a diehard smoker with emphysema it doesn’t matter. You have to die from something; it might as well be something you enjoy.

They now had over 1,000 homes and slabs for another 500. They had added 36 turbines raising their total electrical production from wind to 15 Mw. Gunny had done very well in LA and had brought back the standby generators from a couple of hospitals. There were more, but natural gas or LP/propane powered them all. One of the generators was modular with 10 350kw modules. The other consisted of 2 545kw generators. The extra 4.5Mw still left them short if the wind didn't blow and the sun didn't shine, but they were getting closer, with a total of slightly in excess of 10Mw of generator capacity. It was obvious that Gunny was going to need to make one more trip to LA and get the additional generating capacity.

Ron had filled Travis in on the General's suggestion about how to get rid of the lawyers and Travis had given a nod of approval and said he'd take care of it. Apparently he'd spoken to the two men and they're agreed because on Independence Day they both got up and gave speeches. The Senatorial candidate simply introduced himself and said that he'd appreciate everyone's vote. The candidate for the House got up and started off on a long-winded affair. Eventually someone yelled out for him to shut and sit down, that he was running unopposed, unless of course he wanted competition. The guy said, "Thank you," and sat down, thus remaining unopposed.

On Tuesday, July 5, 2016, Gunny and his troops and truckers headed back to Los Angeles. They got very lucky and stumbled upon a warehouse that held 15 545kw generators and enough spare parts to keep them running for years. The generators were Cummings Power model DFGB 60 Hz generators, if anyone is interested. Two of them exceeded the output of 3 of the 350kw units they had the most of and boosted their total generator capacity to in excess of 18mw. Gunny was being careful this trip, Travis had had a fit when he'd shown up with 2 trailer loads of cigarettes and a trailer load of booze. When some people attacked them just after they'd finished loading the generators and spare parts, Gunny swung the LAVs into action and ordered everyone to bugout to Las Vegas the way they came. They didn't need anything else bad enough to die for.

In Gunny's absence, Travis had contacted General Clark and requested 2 Predators and two crews. Surprisingly, Clark readily agreed and a C-17 cargo aircraft arrived the next day, carrying a UAV Ground Control Station, a Trojan Spirit II SATCOM system and four MQ-9B Predators. A second aircraft, a KC130 arrived later with a load of fuel. A third aircraft, another C-17, carried Hellfire missiles for the Predator plus extra Hellfire, TOW and Zuni Missiles and extra 20mm ammo for the Cobras. The Predator system is composed of three parts: the air vehicle with its associated sensors and communications equipment, the ground control station (GCS), and the product or data dissemination system. One Predator system has four air vehicles with sensors and data links, one Ground Control Station (GCS), and one Trojan Spirit II SATCOM system. The General also sent the Predators crews.

It didn't take a mental giant to figure something was up and Las Vegas, Nevada went on yellow alert. They reached out to Gunny and he told them that he had just been in a fire-fight and was on the way home. Ron told him to put the pedal to the metal. When they

arrived back in Vegas on the 8th of July, no one realized that it would be their last trip to Los Angeles, or for that matter anywhere, for a long time to come. The Predator crews got two UAV's airborne almost immediately and they flew in a circular pattern, 180° apart from that time on. When the UAV's began to run low on fuel, the other two birds were sent aloft to replace them.

On Wednesday, 13Jul16, Las Vegas received a condition Charlie message from 29 Palms and 29 Palms went off the air. Travis ordered 4 F-5A's to take off for 29 Palms to offer whatever support they could. When the pilots arrived, they called for the other 4 F-5A's to be launched for support. 29 Palms was under attack by a massive force that they estimated to number several thousand. The Predator crews launched the other 2 Predators and sent all 4 of the UAV's to 29 Palms too. The first F-5A's expended their ordinance and returned to base to refuel and restock, this time with bombs. Loaded with a maximum combat load, the F-5A was rated as having a combat radius of 195 miles, just the distance to 29 Palms. The later model engines extended their reach to about 250 miles, allowing them time to deliver their loads of bombs. Just after the first flight of four fighters returned to 29 Palms with their full combat loads, a flight of 16 F/A-18's showed up. The F-5 fighters dropped their ordinance as directed and RTB.

Travis directed that the aircraft be rearmed and refueled and placed on 5 minute alert. When the Predators returned, having expended their Hellfire's, they resumed their patrol around Vegas. The two that were lowest on fuel were landed and serviced and replaced the other two. About 2 hours later, Travis received a call from General Clark thanking him for helping out. Those tired old F-5A's had been just enough to cover them until the Hornets arrived. Clark said he'd try to make it to Vegas the next day or the day after. The second shelter was nearing completion and Travis ordered crews to work around the clock to complete it. Basically the shelter was done, but they hadn't had time to cover the bunker/warehouse with the 9' of soil.

"So what happened in Los Angeles, Gunny," Ron asked.

"We'd just finished loading the generators and parts we found when we started taking rifle fire," Gunny replied. "I told everyone but the LAVs to bugout for home and we laid down suppressive fire until they were clear. Nobody got hurt this time, but there's sure as hell is something brewing, big time. That's twice I was attacked and I don't like the sounds of what's goin' on down at 29 Palms. How are you doin' on the shelter?"

"All we need is the cover and to move the essentials into that warehouse and we're set for anything," Ron answered. "We also got the pipeline finished from McCarran and we have nearly an unlimited supply of fuel for our generators."

"Are you sure?" Gunny asked. "I read the spec sheets on those new generators on the way back and they burn about 42 gallons each per hour."

"We tied into the largest fuel bunker at the airport, I think we'll be ok," Ron explained.

"We got more slabs than we got trailers," Gunny observed.

"We have more trailers than we need at the moment, there were 78 women and 425 men from 29 Palms that ended up here. Some of them have already gotten married," Ron laughed.

"You don't say?" Gunny quizzed.

"Yep. We have 25 extra trailers at the moment," Ron replied.

"I could use me a brewski, you want one?" Gunny asked.

"Sure, I haven't had one in a while," Ron answered.

"I'll tell ya man, I don't like this one bit," Gunny said handing Ron a beer. "I'd a thought we'd a had trouble early on, not 6 years after the danged war."

"They had to run out of supplies sometime, Gunny."

"LA was pretty picked over come ta think about it, wasn't no food nowhere. Never did find much ordinance either."

"We don't really need any ordinance, Gunny."

"Yeah, I know, but if we don't got it, someone else does."

In the interval immediately following the January 1, 2010 attack on the country, people were busy trying to survive. Some survived the initial attack only to die days or weeks later because of over exposure to radiation and the unavailability of medical care. Then the second wave, in the form of accidental and intentional disease hit, killing even more. Perhaps General Clark didn't know the exact cause of the people dying, but did it matter? Dead was dead, regardless of the cause. On that evening, Gunny and Ron visited a while longer and Ron left to get some sleep. Gunny, being a practical man, noticed that Ron had only taken a couple of swallows from his beer and helped his friend out by finishing it for him. Around 1500 hours on Friday, 15Jul 16, Clark's C-20A landed at McCarran and he joined Travis, Gunny, Ron, Jim and Ed to discuss what had happened 2 days earlier.

"I appreciate the assistance on Wednesday," Clark began. "We called for air cover immediately, but they had to launch jets out of San Diego, so it took them a while to get there. Those old F-5's of yours were just enough to keep them off of us until the Hornets arrived."

"What was that ruckus all about?" Gunny asked.

“Apparently some of our citizens aren’t happy with the pace the US is recovering,” Clark answered. “We’d noticed all of the looting, but you folks weren’t the only ones. After I evaluated your operation down in Jean and decided to let you keep what you’d taken, we concentrated on trying to find the remaining ordinance and equipment. Simply stated, we couldn’t find it.”

“So whoever took it was salting it away in case they needed it like we were?” Travis asked.

“Yes and no, Travis,” Clark said. “You folks mostly took equipment for a static defense. The others took equipment more intended for a strategic assault. The only strategic equipment that you took were the IAVs and LAVs and you didn’t have all that many of them. These other people were taking tanks and infantry transports in wholesale numbers. Two days ago, we saw why they had taken them. A force we now estimate to be about $\frac{2}{3}$ of a division in strength assaulted us at 29 Palms. It was touch and go until the Hornets showed up.”

“But, you defeated them?” Ron asked.

“More like repelled them, Ron,” Clark replied. “They’re still out there, what’s left of them.”

“Do you have any idea where they’re basing their forces and equipment?” Travis wanted to know.

“If we did, Travis, we’d launch every fighter we have and blow them to kingdom come,” Clark replied.

“So, what can we do to help?” Travis asked.

“Not much, I’m afraid,” Clark replied.

“What a crock of BS,” Gunny snapped. “There’s plenty we can do. We may not have much strategic equipment but we do have a lot of highly trained people General. Where did those people go? It couldn’t have been too far.”

“By the time we got our Predators launched, we couldn’t find them,” Clark explained.

“So, they either went east or west, General,” Gunny said. “If you were in charge of the enemy forces where would you have gone?”

“West, Gunny,” Clark said. “Going east out of 29 Palms would have left them exposed. Going west, they could have holed up anywhere.”

“That’s right and we got hit in Ontario,” Gunny said. “Just before the I-15 northbound. Take a map and draw a circle around Ontario. They will be somewhere inside of that circle.”

“How big of a radius, Gunny?” Ron asked.

“I don’t know, Ron, make it 25 miles,” Gunny suggested.

A circle with a 25 miles radius is $25 \times 25 \times 3.1416$ or about 1963.5 square miles. California has a land area of 155,973 square miles so they only needed to scout 1¼% of the state. No sweat, launch the choppers and search with FLIR, right? Yeah, like the bad guys had never heard of FLIR. Infra-Red means heat, and if the bad guys didn’t have a heat signature, they were home free. Whoa, ‘bad guys’?

That raises an interesting question. Why not ‘enemy’ or ‘opposing forces’ instead of ‘bad guys’? ‘Bad guys’ suggests evil, doesn’t it, while ‘opposing forces’ had no connotation. ‘Enemy’ might be somewhere in between. What made them ‘bad guys’, because they attacked 29 Palms? They were just liberating the prisoners being held by the Army in those camps for the past 6½ years. Or, were they ‘bad guys’ because they looted facilities and armories and took weapons? Nope, that would make the people in Las Vegas the ‘bad guys’, too. ‘Bad guys’ because they’d rounded up all of the food and supplies they could lay their hands on and didn’t pay for them? Nope, Las Vegas again and where did the Army get food to feed people for 6½ years, Super Value stores, Vons or Albertsons? You bet and the clerk rang up their purchases one item at a time. 100 cases of string beans @ \$.89 a can, 400 gallons of milk at \$2.89...

Here the country was just 4 months before elections; even less, the elections would be held on November 1, 2016 and it was already the middle of July. Article I, Section 2, Clause 3 of the Constitution says:

Clause 3: Representatives and direct Taxes shall be apportioned among the several States which may be included within this Union, according to their respective Numbers, which shall be determined by adding to the whole Number of free Persons, including those bound to Service for a Term of Years, and excluding Indians not taxed, three fifths of all other Persons. (See Note 2) The actual Enumeration shall be made within three Years after the first Meeting of the Congress of the United States, and within every subsequent Term of ten Years, in such Manner as they shall by Law direct. The Number of Representatives shall not exceed one for every thirty Thousand, but each State shall have at Least one Representative; and until such enumeration shall be made, the State of New Hampshire shall be entitled to chose three, Massachusetts eight, Rhode-Island and Providence Plantations one, Connecticut five, New-York six, New Jersey four, Pennsylvania eight, Delaware one, Maryland six, Virginia ten, North Carolina five, South Carolina five, and Georgia three.

Now if the population of the US was 300 million before Armageddon, why weren’t there 10,000 Representatives? “Under the Constitution, each state is entitled to at least one

Representative, serving a two-year term. Congress fixes the size of the House of Representatives, which is currently 435, and the procedure of apportioning the number among the states. The 22nd Census was conducted on April 1, 2000, and the resident population totals for each state will be delivered to the President within nine months of the census date. Within a week of the opening of the next session of the Congress, the President must report to the Clerk of the House of Representatives the census totals for each state and the number of Representatives to which each jurisdiction is entitled. Within 15 days, the Clerk of the House will inform each state Governor of the number of Representatives to which each state is entitled. Each state's legislature is responsible for geographically defining the boundaries of their congressional and other election districts."

"The original apportionment of Representatives was assigned in 1787 in the Constitution and remained in effect for the 1st and 2d Congresses. Subsequent apportionments based on the censuses over the years have been figured using several different methods approved by Congress, all with the goal of dividing representation among the states as equally as possible. After each census up to and including the Thirteenth in 1910, Congress would enact a law designating the specific changes in the actual number of Representatives as well as the increase in the ratio of persons-per-Representative. After having made no apportionment after the Fourteenth census in 1920, Congress by statute in 1929 fixed the total number of Representatives at 435 (the number attained with the apportionment after the 1910 census), and since that time, only the ratio of persons per- Representative has continued to increase, in fact, significantly so. Since the total is now fixed, the specific number of Representatives per state is adjusted after each census to reflect its percentage of the entire population. Since the Sixteenth Census in 1940, the "equal proportions" method of apportioning Representatives within the 435 total has been employed. A detailed explanation of the entire apportionment process can be found in *The Historical Atlas of United States Congressional Districts, 1789–1983*. Kenneth C. Martis, *The Free Press, New York, 1982*."

Can you imagine the problems the House would have agreeing on anything if there were 10,000 members?

The Gordian Knot – Chapter 17 – The Patriots

You may recall that the distance between Las Vegas and 29 Palms was given at around 200 miles, right? Road miles, partner, it's only about 150 miles by air. Ontario is 212 air miles. There was no way that Travis would ever let any of his forces out of Las Vegas to search for opposing forces. But, they could spare 2 of their 4 Predators for the task. And the Predators didn't have any trouble finding people, they were in plain sight; they didn't even need FLIR. Maybe one guy's 'bad guy' was another man's Patriot.

Clark sent forces over to Ontario to check the people out. Most were armed with shot-guns, hunting rifles, AR's or M1A's. That didn't set off any alarms and the people were friendly enough. What's the old expression? Believe none of what you hear and only ½ of what you see? Maybe we'd better back up to that question of who is the bad guy, huh? But, you know how to spot a real Patriot, right? Flag on the back window of the car or pickup, 'Don't Tread On Me' sticker on the bumper along with another that said 'Insured by Smith and Wesson'. See how easy that was?

So if the people remaining in Ontario all bought their insurance from some factory formerly located in Geneseo, Illinois and Houlton, Maine (S&W) then either they were Patriots or just liked bumper stickers. And, if they were the ones who attacked 29 Palms, what was that all about? There was only one way to find out, ask them. Well, you couldn't do that directly, because they'd probably not open up. But, you could change your plans and run down to Ontario and invite a few people up to Las Vegas to have a look around in case they might want to join the community. If you did that, and made a big show of how difficult it would be for anyone to bust through your defenses, you might either get someone wanting to move Vegas or send someone a big message that they shouldn't try attacking you.

Of course to make the point and make it good, you have to arrange a flyby for your fighters and gunships. And you would have to make sure the artillery was prominently on display, in some position other than where you usually kept it. The trick was to get them to come look and not to attack instead.

"Hey, y'all," Gunny said in his best southern accent, "I'm down from that new community up in Vegas and I heard tell that if'n I put the word out I might be able to get in touch with some people who was interested in moving to the survival community we built up there."

"Gee, I don't know anyone like that, would you like breakfast or just coffee?" the waitress asked.

"Got any grits?" Gunny asked.

"No, we got cereal and powdered milk plus toast from yesterday's batch of bread," the waitress said, "What's it gonna be?"

"I tell ya sweetheart," Gunny said, "I'll take me some Grape Nuts with milk, coffee and toast."

"It'll corn flakes or nothing mister," she said.

"Ok that's what I said sweetheart, corn flakes with milk, coffee and toast," Gunny smiled.

"At least they have some food," Ron said, "I figured we'd have to eat MRE's"

"Here you go," the waitress said a few minutes later, "That will be \$10 each in green-backs or one dollar in silver. Want anything else?"

"What else ya got, sweetheart?" Gunny asked.

"We got jelly but it's 25 cents a serving in pre-65 silver," she announced.

"Dry is fine," Ron said handing her 2 1920's era silver dollars.

Gunny and Ron stayed in Ontario for 2 days, each time trying to find a different restaurant but always ending up at the same place, the only restaurant in business. They tried to strike up conversations with several people but kept getting the cold shoulder or a lot of aimless babble. If there were any militia people in the area, they were keeping a very low profile. And, they were careful not to snoop around too much because a lot of the people were carrying hunting rifles.

"You think they got the message yet?" Gunny asked Ron.

"If they didn't, there's no one to get the message," Ron indicated. "Let's leave those flyers Travis printed up in several of the stores and that restaurant and head back home."

"Suits me, I hate corn flakes," Gunny said. "And paying \$1.50 in old silver for a MRE for supper is stupid when you have a case of them in that toolbox on the truck. Tasted old, too, I ain't so sure they wasn't going bad."

When it came time to leave, Ron and Gunny opened up that toolbox and put on their Interceptor Vests, their ALICE gear and loaded the Super Match rifles on the rifle rack in the rear pickup window. That attracted a lot of attention, but no one said anything to either one of them. They got in the pickup and headed back to Vegas, uncertain if their mission had been a success. When they arrived back in Vegas a few hours later, General Clark was there and engaged in a heated discussion with Travis.

"There are only 160 A-10 Thunderbolts in the entire Air Force inventory, Travis," Clark was saying when they enter the control center.

“Yeah and 114 OA-10 II’s,” Travis said. “That makes a total of 274. I only want 6 of them. If those forces that attacked 29 Palms had tanks, we’re going to need tank busters.”

“Plus you’ll want Sidewinders, Mavericks and bombs,” Clark said. “If they were in the Army inventory, I might be able to help you out, but they’re Air Force property. The ANG had about 16-17 up in Boise and the regular Air Force had 12 there at Nellis, but I imagine they were destroyed in the strike.”

“If we can find some that nobody is using will you supply the ordinance?” Travis asked.

“Go for it,” Clark said. “You can provide us with air cover down at 29 Palms. How did the trip to Ontario go fellas?”

“They got a restaurant,” Gunny said. “You can get corn flakes and powdered milk for breakfast plus coffee and toast. Jelly is 25 cents extry in pre-65 silver. And they have 3 choices of MRE for supper, all probably not stored at the proper temperature.”

“Did you get anyone interested in coming up here for a look see?” Travis asked.

“Can’t be sure, Travis,” Ron said, “We left the hand bills and made a big deal out of bringing out our rifles when we left.”

“Travis, if you want to check out Gowen Field in Boise or Area 51, that’s where you’re likely to find the A-10’s,” Clark said. “Let me know if you get any and I’ll try to round up the ordinance.”

“Why don’t you load up the 550 Gulfstream and get any of our pilots who thinks they can fly an A-10 to check out Boise?” Travis asked. “I’ll get the artillery repositioned in case any of those people from Ontario show up.”

“We got what, 16 jet jockeys?” Ron asked. “Even if we took everyone, we could only bring back 15 planes.”

“I’d be happy with half that number boys, besides I’m not so sure all of our pilots can fly the A-10,” Travis said.

“Hell, Travis, did you ever meet one of those sierra hotel air jockeys who didn’t think he could fly anything with wings?” Gunny asked. “General how’s about you send a C-130 or a C-17 along to haul the ordinance if we find the planes and some ordinance?”

“I’ll refuel the aircraft,” Travis offered.

“I think it’s a waste of flight time and fuel,” the General said, “But I can spare a C-130. When do you want to go?”

“Have your aircraft on the runway at McCarran at 0600 tomorrow morning,” Travis suggested.

“Well, if you get lucky, it will probably mean that all 17 of those aircraft up at Gowen Field are available,” Clark said. “I’ll try and scrounge up some extra pilots, just in case.”

At the appointed time, the next morning the C-130 arrived and was refueled. Overnight Ron and Gunny had decided to take the Gulfstream 500 as well with a dozen of the ex-special forces people. Gowen Field was on the south side of Boise and just short of 600 miles nearly straight north of Vegas. The missile the Chinese had launched on Boise had hit to the northeast of the city and must have been low yield. While the downtown was destroyed, the airfield was nearly intact. Not so the aircraft, only 14 of the 17 were capable of flight.

They checked them all over, with Murphy conducting most of the examination. Of the 14 aircraft he divined could fly, Clark was to get 8 and Vegas 6. All of the available ordnance would go to Vegas and Clark would have to locate and supply some more. They flew the aircraft back to Vegas and landed everything. The C-130 was emptied and both it and the 8 A-10 II Warthogs were refueled for the short hop to 29 Palms. Travis’ fleet of aircraft had been greatly bolstered with the 6 A-10’s, but if he put up the A-10’s he’d be short of pilots for some of the Gulfstreams. In their absence, he’d moved the artillery to between the wind turbines and the fence, a very poor position.

Although they normally left the gates open at the 4 portals through the fence, Travis ordered them closed and guards posted at all 4 portals. He also requested that the Predator controllers to extend their orbit out to a 20 mile radius; he wanted plenty of warning if those people from Ontario showed up. They didn’t have long to wait, 4 days later a school bus pulled up to the north entrance of the walled in community and requested admittance to have a look around. Once the guard ascertained that they were from Ontario, he lowered the drawbridge and opened the 2 north gates. They had about 30 minutes of warning from the Predator Controllers.

During those 30 minutes, they turned out every adult in the compound in full battle dress. They were told to go about their normal business as if they always walked around armed. 18 men and women dismounted the school bus that they used for transportation and they left their weapons inside the bus. A quick check by the guards while Travis was giving the guests the grand tour reveal M16’s, some with M203’s, LAW rockets and Interceptor body armor. They’d found the group who was probably responsible for the attack on 29 Palms. The weapons were stored under a modified back seat that opened up and the body armor was lying on the seats.

The people were extremely impressed with the two shelters, but Travis heard a couple of snickers when the visitors saw where the artillery was placed. He gave Ron a nod when the tour was about over and the 8 F-5As, 6 A-10 IIs and 4 Cobras made a flyby just as the tour was ending. Each of the aircraft was loaded out with full combat loads.

“That’s our air force you see there,” Travis explained. “We have 6 more planes, but that will give you a general idea of our ability to defend Vegas. We also have a contingent of 4 Predators.”

“And your population is all fitted out with full battle gear?” the leader of the group, a man named John McGee asked.

“Yes John and we have nearly a lifetime supply of ordinance and munitions,” Travis said. “I assume that you have SINCGARS radios, so if you want to reach us, you can reach us at this frequency,” he said handing John a slip of paper. “Our call sign is Golf Kilo One.”

“You hooked in with that bunch of military traitors out at 29 Palms?” McGee asked.

“Why do you call them traitors, John?” Ron butted in.

“Because they’re holding several thousand prisoners out there at that Marine base,” John answered.

“They don’t have any prisoners, John,” Travis said, “Just a group of people too lazy to leave and take care of themselves. A Brigadier General by the name of Al Clark is in charge of the Army Regiment at 29 Palms. I’m sure that if you were willing to take the people off his hands, he’d be more than willing to give them to you to take care of.”

“I’ll think we’ll pass,” McGee replied quickly. “You mean to tell me that all of those people in that camp can leave anytime?”

“Anytime they want,” Travis reiterated.

“Huh,” McGee said, “I guess we got some bad information. If some of us decided to move to Vegas, what’s the deal?”

“This community only has one leader and that’s me,” Travis announced. “If you were to decide to move up here, you have to supply your own mobile homes and transport them yourselves.”

“You don’t have a city council or vote on things?” McGee asked.

“No, John,” Travis said, “This group started out, in Nevada anyway, as 2 corporations based down in Jean. I own both companies. Back when the Chinese attacked, we were fairly small, less than 300 people, all employees and their families. I provided shelter for the customers at the Gold Strike when the Chinese hit and some of them stayed on. Others left, but came back. We picked up some other people over the past few years and moved from Jean up here to the former Las Vegas to take advantage of the remaining area assets.”

“So what do you call yourself, King Travis?” McGee asked.

“Watch yer mouth McGee,” Gunny growled. “Travis Dean is the most compassionate man I know.”

“Probably as long as there’s a buck in it,” McGee snapped.

“I take it you won’t be moving to Vegas,” Travis said.

“No, this country is a democracy,” McGee replied. “We want no part of your autocracy.”

“You’re wrong about that McGee,” Travis corrected. “The United States of America is a Republic with a democratic type of government, not a Democracy. In a Democracy, the majority always rules.”

“You’re a majority of one,” McGee snorted.

“I only control the assets of my corporations,” Travis said, “And corporations or not, I couldn’t remain in charge if we didn’t do what was in the best interests of our people.”

“We’ll be leaving now, if that ok with you, your Majesty,” McGee sneered.

“Hey McGee,” Gunny started to react.

“Let them go Gunny,” Travis directed.

Gunny response was classic. He snapped to attention and said, “I Pledge Allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Democracy for which it stands: one Nation under God, except in the 9th Circuit, indivisible, With Liberty and Justice for all.”

“Just doesn’t sound right, does it Gunny?” Ron all but laughed.

“We oughta kill that bunch now rather than when they come back,” Gunny muttered.

“I’ll fly down to 29 Palms and fill Clark in on what we learned and what we suspect,” Travis announced. “You finish moving that stuff into the second bunker and have everyone put their combat gear away.”

Just as Travis was arriving at McCarran to head to 29 Palms, a C-17 landed. General Clark was aboard the aircraft.

“I saw a school bus on I-15 when we making our approach,” Clark pointed out.

“That was that people from Ontario, General,” Travis explained. “They won’t be moving to Las Vegas, they’re a little confused.”

“Were they behind that attack on 29 Palms?” Clark asked sharply.

“They didn’t really say that they were, but they were under the impression that those people you’re providing for are prisoners,” Travis replied. “I told them that you’d be happy to let them have those people.”

“I brought some APU’s plus some ordinance for those Warthogs,” Clark said explaining his presence. “We flew into Area 51 and picked up the other 12 A-10s. That’s quite the place.”

“Did you find Kennedy’s head or any alien bodies?” Travis chuckled.

“No, but you should see some of the aircraft they were working on,” Clark responded. “As for those people in Ontario, I think I’ll just dump all of my ‘prisoners’ on them and let them take care of them.”

“Are you staying or just passing through?” Travis asked.

“Got to get back to 29 Palms and release those ‘prisoners’,” Clark replied.

When Travis returned from McCarran he explained to Jim, Ed, Ron and Gunny, his ‘Board of Directors’ more or less, what General Clark had in mind. Gunny insisted that they should have killed ‘them SOBs from Ontario’.

“I’m telling ya Travis,” Gunny ranted, “You add them no accounts from 29 Palms to that bunch down in Ontario and we’ve got trouble.”

“I think we can handle them Gunny,” Ron said. “We have those tank busters to supplement our F-5 fighters.”

Each A-10 II aircraft was capable of destroying up to 16 tanks in the hands of a proficient pilot. With all of the citizens of the community safely holed up behind those 10’ thick walls, there wouldn’t be any friendly forces to avoid. Plus, they had the F-5’s and artillery, so unless those people from Ontario had aircraft of their own, Travis presumed that they didn’t have much to fear from those people in Ontario. With over 3,000 people in the community, they had bigger fish to fry, like producing enough food to feed everyone. They also ran a seining operation over at Lake Meade, keeping the bigger fish and throwing the smaller ones back for next year’s harvest.

What they’d missed most for a considerable period of time was meat as in beef and pork and chickens. It was a problem because if the livestock ate the grass with the left over radiation, they could ingest radioactive elements like Strontium-90. Eventually they’d driven to Wyoming and purchased a herd of cattle that were supposedly radiation free. That took a large chunk out of the \$2 million the hotel/casinos had paid Travis for boarding their guests. They’d also bought some hogs and some fertile eggs and started their own chicken flock, but all of that came after they’d moved to Vegas. Their principal

problem now was getting feed for the livestock. So, they made a trip to Bakersfield and got some farm equipment and started to grow alfalfa, corn, oats, barley and wheat in addition to their gardens and livestock.

In late September of 2016, barely 6 weeks before the election and just after they'd finished the harvest, the Predators spotted a large formation of vehicles down around Ivanpah Dry Lake. There were tanks on transporters, artillery and infantry, but no aircraft that they could see. Travis ordered Vegas on full alert and called Clark on the radio to tell them they had a condition Bravo (possible threat). Clark responded that he was sending his 20 A-10 IIs up to McCarran with full combat loads. He'd also move out the Brigade, but that would take time.

The Gordian Knot – Chapter 18 – An Unfair Fight

One side has 26 A-10 IIs and 8 F-5's plus 4 Cobra gunships. The Apaches are inbound from 29 Palms. The other side has lots of tanks, Stinger missiles, artillery and infantry. Who is going to win? Nobody. Whoever prevails in the battle, it's going to be Americans against Americans. Any lines out of movies come to mind? *What we've got here is... failure to communicate. Some men you just can't reach. So you get what we had here last week, which is the way he wants it... well, he gets it. I don't like it any more than you men.*

The Mk-20 Rockeye is a free-fall, unguided cluster weapon designed to kill tanks and armored vehicles. The system consists of a clamshell dispenser, a mechanical Mk-339 timed fuze, and 247 dual-purpose armor-piercing shaped-charge bomblets. The bomblet weighs 1.32 pounds and has a 0.4-pound shaped-charge warhead of high explosives, which produces up to 250,000 psi at the point of impact, allowing penetration of approximately 7.5 inches of armor. Rockeye is most efficiently used against area targets requiring penetration to kill. Fielded in 1968, the Rockeye dispenser is also used in the Gator air-delivered mine system. The bomblets free fall over a 3,300 square yard area and detonate on impact. The shaped warhead charge in the bomblet is good against armor and soft skinned targets.

During Desert Storm US Marines used the weapon extensively, dropping 15,828 of the 27,987 total Rockeyes against armor, artillery, and antipersonnel targets. The remainder were dropped by Air Force (5,345) and Navy (6,814) aircraft.

The Mk 427 Mod 0 and Mod 1 shipping and storage containers encase one fully assembled Mk 20 bomb cluster. The reusable containers consist of metal upper and lower shell assemblies that are secured with either 16 quick-release latches (Mod 0) or 18 "T" latches (Mod 1). A rubber gasket provides an environmental seal when the upper and lower shells are mated. External frame members are welded to each half of the container so the containers can be stacked six high and provide the necessary fittings for ground-handling equipment.

The reusable weapon cradle Mk 18 Mod 0 is used to ship and store two fully assembled Mk 20 bomb clusters. The cradle consists of plastic upper and lower shell assemblies, which are shock-mounted on a metal cradle assembly. The weapon cradle has forklift guides, lifting eyes, handtruck brackets, and lift devices to permit the use of handling equipment. Four supports are provided on each cradle to aid in stacking the cradle.

The Abrams hull and turret are built of a material similar to the ceramic-and-steel-plate Chobham armor developed in Britain. The driver is seated in a reclining position in the front of the hull; the commander and gunner are in the turret on the right, and the loader is on the left. Armor plate separates the crew compartment from the fuel tanks and ammunition storage area.

In March 1988, a program to develop and mount depleted uranium armor plate on the M1A1 was begun. A non-radioactive substance, depleted uranium has a density at least two-and-a-half times greater than steel. The depleted uranium armor will raise the total weight of the Abrams tank to 65 tons, but offers vastly improved protection in the bargain. (Chobham II)

Now there is an interesting issue. Can the upgraded depleted uranium Chobham armor resist a hit from a Rockeye bomblet? The CBU-59 APAM Rockeye II is an antipersonnel, antimatériel weapon developed in the 1970s as a successor to Rockeye. It uses the same Rockeye dispenser, but has 717 smaller BLU-77 bomblets fitted into the case. In addition to its armor-piercing effect, it also has antipersonnel fragmentation and incendiary features. One hundred and eighty-six were delivered during the Gulf war. And, did we really want to blow up our own Abrams tanks?

Maybe seeing that flight of 20 A-10's headed towards Las Vegas from 29 Palms, up high out of reach of the Stinger missiles did the trick. Maybe, but if they were that high, did the people at Ivanpah even see them? The Stinger, as you no doubt know, has a ceiling of 10,000'. We can only assume that the pilots of those A-10's that General Clark sent to McCarran knew that and stayed above 13,000 feet AMSL. The elevation of the dry lakebed is 2,595'. And, had the people at Ivanpah been able to disable the IFF feature that every Stinger carried? Those people had seen the flyby of the 8 F-5's, 6 A-10's and 4 Cobras carrying full combat loads, so what could they be thinking?

"As much as I'd like to get them sum bits," Gunny said, "Somethin' ain't right."

"What do you mean?" Ron asked.

"They saw that flyby, right?" Gunny said. "Why in the hell would they be down there at Ivanpah? It wouldn't take many of those A-10's loaded with Rockeyes to wipe out all of those tanks the Predator people say they have."

"They haven't called and I gave McGee our frequency and call sign," Travis pointed out.

General Clark walked in the combat center and asked, "What's going on fellas, have they made a move?"

"We can't figure it out General," Travis said, "They saw what they're up against when they were up here around the end of July. They're just sitting there according to your Predator people."

"You know, they came out with a new leaflet bomb, the LBU-30 back in 2000," Clark said. "It's nothing more than a SUU-30 Cluster munition dispenser. You have plenty of those; they're what are used to carry the bomblets for the CBU52, 58 and 71. We could try dropping leaflets. Maybe the guy in charge is a madman."

Ron grabbed a piece of paper and scratched out a note. "Will this do?" he asked.

ATTENTION!!!

The Community of Las Vegas and the US Army have a force of 26 A-10 IIs, 8 F5-As and 4 AH-1W Super Cobras poised to attack your formation. Additional AH-64D Apache Longbow Helicopters are on the way. Contact Golf Kilo One on 50MHz on your SINCGARS radio. You have one hour to comply.

“They can’t say we didn’t warn them,” Gunny smiled. “Sides that will give the Apaches time to get here and refuel.”

“Put it on the computer and run some off,” Travis said. “It will take a while to print them and we can get a SUU-30 emptied out. Put all of the aircraft on 15 minute alert except for 2 A-10’s armed with 10 M-20 Rockeyes each. Put them on a 5 minute alert.”

It took an hour to print just 3,000 of the leaflets. In the meantime, 2 of the A-10 IIs were switched to 10 Rockeyes each and put on 5-minute alert. A 430 flew in and picked up the leaflets and they were placed in the SUU-39 and it was mounted on one of the General’s A-10’s. (You didn’t think Travis would be stupid enough to use one of his, did you?) The A-10 dropped the LBU-30 from 13,000’ feet and RTB. Fifty minutes later, they received a radio call on 50MHz for Golf Kilo One. Someone, obviously not McGee, wanted to talk. Travis told them to send their representatives to the Jean exit and they would discuss the situation.

“All right, who wants to go?” Travis asked.

Gunny, Ron, Jim and Ed were already putting on their Vests and ALICE gear. General Clark nodded to CAPTAIN Rogers and Rogers got some guards. They took 2 of the 430’s down to Jean and arrived at the exit shortly before the people from Ivanpah showed up. When they did, McGee was in the back of a Hummer, firmly bound. The 2 A-10’s had taken off and were circling overhead. Three men got out of the Hummer and introduced themselves. They were: Jim Ryan, he was in charge, Larry Jones and Bob Henry. McGee, or so they claimed was out of his mind.

“That’s not hard to believe, Ryan,” Travis smiled, “What do you propose?”

“What’s the story on those prisoners you had at 29 Palms and dumped on us?” Ryan asked.

“They weren’t prisoners Mr. Ryan,” General Clark replied. “We provided those people with food and shelter for 6½ years. Since you had a community going there in Ontario, we just sent them to you.”

“They’re a worthless lot,” Ryan said. “They expect us to feed them. Anyway, we didn’t know anything about any aircraft. John never mentioned them.”

"I don't recall seeing any of you folks in that group that was up here a couple of months ago," Travis commented.

"That's because none of us came to Las Vegas," Ryan explained. "John said he would get the straight scoop. Then, when he got back, he said that your artillery was out of position and you would be a pushover."

"So, what do you want to do?" Travis asked.

"What's the real story about Las Vegas?" Ryan wanted to know.

"It's like I told McGee, the only price of admission is a 14'x70' mobile home for you to live in, and I'm in charge," Travis reiterated for the 3 men's benefit.

"Would we have to bring those people the General dumped on us, if we came?" Jones asked.

"No, but you can't shoot them either," Clark joked.

"How many people do you have in Ontario?" Travis asked. "We have a limit on space."

"About 6,000 of OUR people," Bob Henry replied.

"You know the conditions, what do you want to do?" Travis asked.

"Could we have a few minutes to discuss this?" Ryan asked.

"Take as long as you need," Travis said. He walked over to a chopper and told the pilot to radio the A-10's and instruct them to RTB.

No sooner had the A-10's departed than the flight of 4 Super Cobras took up a position overhead. Travis was about to return to the chopper and instruct them to RTB when Ryan said they had a decision.

"Ok, what'll it be?" Travis asked.

"Subject to agreement by the remainder of the folks, we'd like to come to Las Vegas," Ryan said.

"No dispute over my absolute authority?" Travis asked.

"If it doesn't work out, we'll just leave," Ryan replied.

"Fine, bring your heavy weapons up to Vegas and drop them off," Travis said. "We'll give you what vehicles we can spare and you can go back to Ontario for trailers and

your things. Gunny and Ron, you boys had better get busy on shelter number 3 and we might need to think about adding a 4th shelter to the list.”

“Ron, you build them and I’ll supervise,” Gunny said.

“On second thought Gunny, you’re going to need to go back to LA and get more bunk beds and kitchen equipment,” Travis spoiled the clowning.

“General Clark, is there anyone left at Edwards?” Gunny asked.

“No, why Gunny?” Clark asked.

“Bunk beds, General, I need about 6,000 more,” Gunny groaned.

“You’ll be lucky to find ½ that many at Edwards, Gunny,” Clark responded.

“Yeah, but it’s a start,” Gunny smiled.

“What kind of beds do you need?” Ryan asked.

“Those standard military bunk beds,” Gunny said.

“We’ll have a look around March AFB and see if we can find any,” Ryan replied.

“While you’re at it Mr. Ryan, look for Viking commercial ovens and cook tops, electric only,” Gunny suggested. “You have any generators?”

While Gunny and Jim Ryan and the others went over Gunny’s shopping list, Ron told Travis that 3 shelters would be enough. At 4,900 persons per shelter, 3 shelters would give them space for 14,700 people. Travis agreed and told him they could get by with just one more shelter, but they were going to need a few thousand more slabs, more septic fields and possibly more electrical capacity. Ron went to find Gunny and give him the bad news. They needed plumbing and wiring and cement and aggregate more than anything else for their building program, and lots of it. Since Gunny knew the drill, he consulted at some length with his new best friends who told him there were lots of building materials in the Inland Empire.

6,000 people translated into about 2,000 plus trailers. There was always Phoenix and its empty trailers if the people from Ontario couldn’t come up with enough. And if they went to 3,000 plus homes and each home had 100-amp service, their electrical demand could increase another 72mw not including the industrial buildings, so call the total needed capacity 100mw. This meant a trip or 6 to Palm Springs and moving a lot of wind turbines. Ron got to thinking that they needed to move the wind turbines and livestock operations out of the enclosed area. But, if they did that, their equipment and animals would be exposed to risk, so that meant building a separate fenced in area abutting the 4 square mile area. They needed lots of cement components and a lot of labor

to accomplish all of that. On the other hand with 6,000 new residents, labor wouldn't be a problem. They'd have a minimum of 2,000 additional employees for construction and no doubt the women could take over some of the guard duties while the construction projects were going on. He also figured that it would be easier to fence off the moat with barbed wire rather than fill it back in, so he told Gunny to add steel posts and barbed wire to his shopping list.

By this time, Gunny and the 3 fellas from Ontario had agreed that Gunny should make his first supply run to San Bernardino (Berdoos to Gunny) and his second to Edwards. That way, he could get the primary items on his list and then head to Edwards to get the additional bunk beds. Gunny had decided that he wouldn't need all of the IAVs and LAVs and could get by with the LAVs only and that was just to cover them while they traveled between Berdoos and Vegas. Trains could transport many of the things they needed too.

Hemmed in as they were on 3 sides by those freeways, Ron also realized that they could only expand the compound to the south. It appeared to him that they were looking at another year of construction, even with the additional labor. He had 500 slabs in, so it could have been worse. The people from Ontario had 96 of the M1A2SEPs so they could divide them up around their perimeter, which he calculated would go from 8 miles to 11 miles. A 2 mile square area would be ample room for the livestock, livestock buildings and the turbines. They were going to need a fair number of additional generators and he could only hope that Gunny could come up with more of the 545kw units. If they boosted their generator capacity from 33Mw, they'd need at least 123 more of those units.

Even using all of the remaining solar panels from 29 Palms, they'd be short on the solar generation, but they hadn't even touched that 5mw solar setup in Barstow. Twentynine Palms only had 1.2mw. And they could always give it back if someone complained (fat chance). November 1 soon rolled around and their two candidates got elected to Congress. By this time, Ron was well on the way to having the shelter portion of the 3rd shelter completed and Gunny only lacked beds. They borrowed another batch plant because the demands for concrete exceeded the capacity of one plant and even with the second, they barely kept up. They got the additional 1,500 slabs in and the septic system expansion and ran the utilities for the homes. Once the new residents were in their homes, they pitched in and helped. By January 1, 2017, they were ahead of schedule.

One day in early January, Ron had collapsed into a chair and was just trying to catch his breath when Gunny walked in and handed him a bottle of beer.

"We're making that run to Edwards tomorrow to pick up those bunk beds, you want to ride along?" Gunny asked.

"Man, I could use a break," Ron said pulling on the beer. "What I don't understand, Gunny, is why we need 3 shelters. This place is nothing more than a trailer park and there is room for more trailers. When we finish covering over that bunker/warehouse,

we're going to be able to shelter almost half again as many people as we have. We've got the wind turbines up from Palm Springs, but still have to install them. We're going as fast as we can on that new fence, but it won't be done and filled in until June."

"Yeah, and we still have to run all of those people through the Survival School," Gunny said. "Jim told me that would take until the late fall to complete."

"I just don't see the need, Gunny," Ron continued. "We wiped out the Chinese and Russia would never attack us. The government seems to be doing well."

"Inauguration Day is next week, Ron," Gunny said, "We still don't know what to expect from that new President. We could always end up in another war, ya know."

"Bite your tongue, you old fart," Ron said quickly but playfully.

"We're leaving for Edwards at 0600," Gunny said, "I'm going to get some sleep."

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"We ran one of the Predators down and scouted Edwards overnight," Travis told Ron and Gunny. "There were some heat signatures, so you boys had better take the IAVs and the LAVs."

"Lots of heat signatures?" Gunny asked.

"Enough to be concerned about, I'll have the aircraft all on 15 minute alert, just in case you have trouble."

"Look, I figure about 4-5 hours to Edwards, why don't you launch the A-10's and F-5's timed to arrive when we do?" Gunny suggested.

"That's probably 200 air miles, give or take," Travis said. "I'll launch half of the A-10's for Edwards and send the remainder down to Barstow. Plus, I'll get in touch with the General and ask him to fly a KC-130 into Barstow so we can refuel the aircraft. The runway at Barstow-Daggett is too short for the F-5's. But, I could send the Cobras."

"You want we should take some extra ordinance and leave it at Barstow?" Gunny asked.

"Might be a good idea Gunny, you never know what we're going to run into," Travis agreed, perhaps a bit quickly.

"Why are you putting the backup planes at Barstow?" Ron asked, "Mojave is a lot closer to Edwards. Plus the runway is long enough for the F-5's (9,502')."

"Hey, that way, we could have all the planes," Gunny grinned. "I like that better."

“I’ll send 6 of the F-5’s and 4 of the A-10’s,” Travis said. “If 10 fighters aren’t enough, we’ll just need to bugout.”

The gist of it turned out to be that some of those people from Ontario, the lazy ones, had moved out once they lost their meal ticket and some of them were at Edwards. Must have been a bunch of liberals, they immediately surrendered when they saw the IAVs and LAVs. Gunny’s crew dismantled the bunk beds and loaded them aboard the semis for the trip back to Las Vegas. They found enough bunks between those stored at March and those just sitting at Edwards to finish out the 3rd shelter. In his absence, Ron’s construction crew had poured the lid on the 3rd shelter and all there was left to complete was the bunker/warehouse on top.

Travis had taken over Ron’s supervisory duties during his one-day absence and he immediately started making changes. He told the slab crews to put in 500 more slabs and utilities. Gunny had scored enough generators to raise their generator capacity to 40Mw and they had enough turbines from Palm Springs to match their generator capacity. Ron had gotten tired of doing things piecemeal and had put in extra septic tanks and drain fields. Because of the expansion to the south, he’d had to move the entire septic field anyway and put the new installation in over a mile south of the new fence they were erecting south of the city. Ron had just put in every tank that Gunny had come up with.

Speaking of which, Berdoo had been a gold mine and Gunny had scored big in the appliance category. They were able to add a large walk-in freezer to the second bunker/warehouse. They had miles of wire, enough for those 500 extra slabs Travis wanted and more. Travis also sent a crew down to Barstow to start dismantling the 5mw solar array. He sent 2 of The Super Cobras, for protection.

40mw of electricity is a lot. It was only 40% of their projected requirement. It would mostly depend upon the size of the home services with could run from 100amps up to 400amps. If by some fluke, every dwelling in Las Vegas was drawing its full 100 amps, that was 100 times 240 or 24kw. 80,000kw of power meant they could theoretically have over 3,333 homes and we all know that no one ever uses 100 amps of electricity even on the hottest day running air conditioning. If each of the homes used 200amps at 120, the number of houses fell to 1,666 homes. Business locations using 400 amps or more would further eat into the available power.

Moreover, by using the mobile homes, they were creating a city with a very high population density. At least they didn’t cram those homes together like they did down in Mesa in those snowbird parks. Some of those places in Mesa used to be so tightly packed that if you broke wind, they could smell it 3 doors down.

“Travis, we aren’t going to have enough room for our artillery,” Ron announced when he got back from Edwards and saw them grading more slabs.

“Sure we will, we’re putting in a park, you can put the artillery there,” Travis said.

“So, we’ll have cannons instead of Jungle Gyms?” Ron asked.

“They don’t call them Jungle Gyms anymore Ron, they’re called play structures,” Travis explained.

The people from Ontario had 96 M1A2SEP Abrams tanks, over 100 M2 and M3 Bradley fighting vehicles mostly the M2, M109A6 Paladin self-propelled howitzers, and an assortment of up-armored HMMWV’s, some with Stinger missiles, some with TOW’s and others with machine guns. If the Russians ever decided to invade the US, they’d better stay away from Las Vegas. Vegas had more armor than General Clark did down at 29 Palms. They also had an impressive array of munitions and ordnance. Say, what’s the difference between munitions and ordnance? (None, they’re synonyms.)

The Gordian Knot – Chapter 19 – The New Washington

Travis considered it mixed blessing to have all of the armor and artillery. No one was likely to mess with them, but he really didn't want to support all of that equipment. He had been perfectly happy when all they had were some LAVs, IAVs and aircraft. As it was, they had as much equipment as General Clark. However, Clark had something that Travis very much wanted, Apaches and A-10 IIs. He contacted the General once he was pretty certain that the new residents from Ontario would be staying and offered a trade. Clark could have the armor and mechanized artillery and all of their stores in exchange for 6 more A-10 IIs, 2 more Super Cobras, 6 Apache Longbows and some fighters a little more modern than his old F-5's.

With the Air Force in love with its modern aircraft and the manufacturing sector finally beginning to deliver the F-35 Joint Strike Fighters again, he decided to be bold and ask for 3 flights (12) F-15E Strike Eagles.

Strike Eagles are equipped with LANTIRN, enhancing night PGM delivery capability. The F-15E outboard and inboard wing stations and the centerline can be loaded with various armaments. The outboard wing hardpoint are unable to carry heavy loads and are assigned for ECM pods. The other hardpoints can be employed for various loads but with the use of multiple ejection racks (MERs). Each MER can hold six Mk-82 bombs or "Snakeye" retarded bombs, or six Mk 20 "Rockeye" dispensers, four CBU-52B, CBU- 58B, or CBU-71B dispensers, a single Mk-84 (907 kg) bomb F- 15E can carry also "smart" weapons, CBU-10 laser guided bomb based on the Mk 84 bomb, CBU-12, CBU-15, or another, laser, electro-optical, or infra-red guided bomb (including AGM-G5 "Maverick" air-to-ground) missiles. For air-to-ground missions, the F-15E can carry most weapons in the Air Force inventory. It also can be armed with AIM 7F/M Sparrows, AIM-9M Sidewinders, and AIM-120 advanced medium range air-to-air missiles (AM-RAAM) for the air-to-air role. The "E" model also has an internally mounted 20mm gun, which can carry up to 450 rounds.

The Air Force owned all 236 F-15Es. But, they were slated to be replaced by the F-22 Raptors. Production of the Raptors had been halted for almost 6 years but had resumed in late 2015 and all of the orders had been filled. Production of the F-35's had resumed at the same time. The F-35 was also slated to replace the A-10 IIs. It pays, sometimes to dream big, but those Strike Eagles were hard to come by. Clark had the A-10 IIs and Longbow's so that part of the trade was easy. The beauty of Travis's scheme was that the A-10 IIs and F-15Es carried most of the same weapons. Compare:

Weapon--	A-10	F-15
M61A1-----		1
GAU8-A-----		1
AGM-65-----		4
AIM-7-----		4
AIM-9-----	2	4
AIM-120-----		8

CBU-52-----6/10----6/12
 CBU-58-----6/10
 CBU-59-----6/12
 CBU-71-----6/10----6/12
 CBU-87-----6/10----6/12
 CBU-89-----6/10----6/12
 CBU-97-----6/10
 MK-20-----6/10----6/20
 MK-82-----12
 MK-84-----4
 M-77-----6
 GBU-10-----2-----4
 GBU-12-----4-----8
 GBU-15-----1
 GBU-28-----2
 JDAM -----4
 Zuni-----14

(Duplicate numbers indicate with and without fuel pods. All figures approximate.)

So, how do you get the US Air Force to give up a dozen Strike Eagles? Well, that's why you have a Senator and Representative in your pocket, right? You get 'your' Congressmen to suggest to the Air Force that they should transfer some of their oldest Strike Eagles to the Army and let General Clark take it from there. Your Congressmen promises the Air Force something it really wants, knowing full well that they can vote for it and Congress will never approve it. The Air Force had taken delivery of the first Strike Eagles way back in 1988, so it wasn't like they were new airplanes. Now, all you need is aircrews for the extra airplanes. Assuming you can cross train your 8 F-5 pilots to one or the other of the craft, you're only short 10 pilots and 12 Wizzos. Plus pilots for those Gulfstreams and the new choppers.

And, this was 2017 after all and the Air Force probably didn't need those Eagle crews anyway. So you offer them a job including great pay and free housing and your F-15Es are flying. Might as well get some A-10 II crews, too and your pilots can go back to their Gulfstreams. Maybe General Clark could spare some Apache crews, they must be due to get out and if you can fly an Apache, you can probably fly a Super Cobra. And in the blink of an eye, you're rid of all that armor and self-propelled artillery and you have a regular air force all of your own. And, wouldn't you know it; with all of that extra equipment General Clark has a Division and another star. Money might be great, but it helps to have powerful friends in powerful places.

"It took us a long time to get all of that equipment Travis," Jim Ryan was quick to point out. "What are you getting to replace it?"

"We're going to have 24 fighters and a dozen choppers and we'll still have some artillery and Light Armored Vehicles," Travis replied.

“Don’t forget the infantry,” Gunny hollered out.

“And infantry, Jim,” Travis added. “Gunny aren’t you ever going to retire?”

“What the hell for?” Gunny laughed, “I’m having fun.”

Gunny was having fun, too. While Ron was busy finishing up the fence and installation of all of the additional electrical services and getting 500 more trailers hauled in from far off Phoenix, Gunny was ‘supervising’. You can always tell who the ‘supervisor’ is; he’s the one with the sunglasses and the cooler full of cold beer, sitting in the lawn chair. Of course, the ‘supervisor’ has awesome responsibilities; he has to show them where to drop the ‘new’ trailers. That doesn’t necessarily require getting out of your chair or putting down your beer. All you really have to do is waive your arm and shout, “Over there.”

The new administration was taking great pains to try and rebuild America. They got the printing presses rolling and were spending money as fast as they could print it. They began to rebuild the great cities, but they weren’t so big anymore. With more than $\frac{2}{3}$ of the population gone, they didn’t need a lot of skyscrapers. As the military had cleaned up areas, people began to move back in. This was a slightly different country after Armageddon. There weren’t so many liberals anymore, but give them a generation. The government had managed to recover most of the stolen military equipment, in deals like Major General Clark’s. All, except some ‘obsolete’ equipment. The military had begun replacing the M16’s with the HK-416 and HK-417 in 2010. The conservative Congress, perhaps in recognition of the proliferation of assault weapons, had repealed the NFA, GCA68, FOIA86, etc. Not much else had changed, however.

Hell, that isn’t true, look at Las Vegas. It was now a closed community, a fortress, if you will. It had its own air force and the political clout and friends to keep any liberals who popped up off its back. As a community, Las Vegas was almost totally self-sufficient. They generated their own electricity and so forth. About the only thing they were dependent upon the rest of the country for was fuel. Travis had studied the question of alternate fuels and biodiesel didn’t make much sense. In the first place it was hotter than hell in Vegas and it was hard to grow a lot of crops. In the second place, it required a major investment to produce biodiesel on a large scale. However, that didn’t mean that Travis was opposed to biodiesel, just that they didn’t produce it in Las Vegas.

What they did instead was recycle all of their veggie oils and sell them to a biodiesel processor. The processor sold the 20% petroleum/biodiesel blend and that’s what they came to use in their vehicles. But, no community can long endure without an external source of income. Before the ‘war’ Las Vegas was the gambling capital of the country and after the war and after things had settled down, it became the new security capital of the country. TGK, LLC had a lot of opportunities to provide security for others and were, after all, rather adept at it. They did have their own air force and a small fleet of Gulfstreams that was now beginning to grow. Plus they had that survival school and

their reputation. Most of their business now centered on secure transportation since most of the airlines hadn't resumed business. (Think Blackwater to the tenth power)

Had you stopped and thought what must have happened to all of those airplanes that were in the skies over the country when the bombs started falling on January 1, 2010? It wasn't like September 11, 2001 because there weren't many airports left to land at. All of those EMP's had done a real number on some of the jets that were airborne. There again, Travis had an advantage. One, he had an airport and two, he knew where Mojave, CA was. Mojave's dry desert climate and acres of available open space makes the Airport an ideal location for short- and long-term storage of aircraft.

AVTEL Services, Inc., one of the Airport's Community Businesses, provided storage and associated aircraft maintenance services for many US and international airlines and leasing companies, before the war. Now, AVTEL was the source for Travis's new fleet of airlines. Well hell, they were just sitting there, and, there were a lot of pilots out of work. So why not put the two together and base those airplanes in Las Vegas? Now, if you think that El Al was a secure airline, you haven't seen anything yet. There weren't all that many airliners in Mojave to begin with and those that Travis flew had two armed uniformed soldiers aboard every flight. If you didn't like guns, you'd better drive.

The problem with the airline industry before the war was that they had too many planes to pay for and too much competition. As far back as 2004, the number of US Airlines had dropped. The companies still in business were Alaska, America West, American, Continental, Delta, Northwest, Southwest, United and US Airlines. You can try to go to twa.com, but they flew their last flight in 2001 when American bought them out. It was all Reagan's fault, but that's another story. Every time they deregulated another industry or broke up another monopoly, the public suffered. Sure the airfares went down, but they should hand out Bibles to every airline passenger. What was that article I read? *With United and US Airways bankrupt and Delta on the edge...* Don't you just love that show, *Seconds from Disaster*? Why did that Alaska Airline plane crash in the ocean? Couldn't afford grease? You're kidding, right? TWA 800, worn out wiring.

The new Washington wasn't bailing out any airlines and hence there weren't any US airlines except for TGK, LLC. Their tickets were expensive, but their airplanes were well maintained. They left on time and arrived on time, which was a new experience for those who flew them. And, they were more secure than El Al. They allowed smoking on their flights in the front of the plane and the non-smokers got to sit in the rear, just like Rosa Parks. The non-smokers deserved it, but poor Rosa didn't. The booze was free too, and it was like flying on KAL, they poured from real bottles. The problem was that since the war, no foreign carriers were allowed in the US, Homeland Security, I guess. You know why they used to charge \$4 for a beer, right? They had to pay for the jet fuel somehow. Maybe that's why the 2-drink limit hadn't meant a lot on some airlines. But if you lit up a cigarette, they tossed you in jail.

Most airlines in the good old days had one or two hubs located at their busiest airports. TGK's hub was Las Vegas but Las Vegas wasn't a scheduled stop, with one exception.

The airport runways in many of the big cities had survived the attack but the airports themselves had lost their buildings and equipment. The government had rebuilt a few of the airports under the guise of alternate military bases. And while Washington wouldn't foot the bill for any of the airlines starting back up, they urged them to do so, nevertheless. Travis wouldn't have minded the competition. He had far too few planes to service the entire country with anything more than one flight a week to many locations. New civilian aircraft were completely unavailable because what aircraft manufacturing there was, was devoted to manufacture of the military aircraft.

Those industries that were making a big comeback were mostly in the area of building supplies. You couldn't rebuild a home without timber and gypsum board and electrical components. And, you didn't see many regional power plants as America began to re-electrify. These were usually community-based systems and they used whatever they could get to fuel those power plants. This had led the government to spend supplemental funds rebuilding the rail system, to transport coal, building materials and passengers.

"What puzzles me more than anything else is why the military buildup?" Gunny observed.

"Nobody came to the US after the war Gunny because of the mess and the fact that the military had a blockade," Ron suggested. "Maybe now that the US is dug out and becoming a real country again, Washington figures we're prime pickings."

"If this country can keep its nose out of everyone else's business, we'll be a lot better off," Gunny exclaimed. "This country hasn't been invaded since 1916."

Historical Note: In the early morning darkness of March 9, 1916, guerrillas of the Mexican Revolution under General Francisco "Pancho" Villa attacked the small New Mexico border town and military camp at Columbus – the site of what is now Pancho Villa State Park. Villa had attacked the town because an American merchant refused to deliver guns that Villa had already paid for. After an 11-month long expedition into México, General Black Jack Pershing and his 10,000-troop army gave up, failing to capture Villa.

"That's a matter of opinion, Gunny," Travis chimed in. "The Mexicans had been invading the US continually until January 1, 2010."

"What's playing at the movies tonight?" Gunny changed the subject.

There were 3 6-story shelters each with 5 stories that each had a day room. Rather than build a separate theatre, they had located and installed popcorn poppers in 10 of the 15 dayrooms and every night those dayrooms showed a different DVD or VHS movie. They dubbed the setup 'Movies 10'. From all appearances, the new city of Las Vegas had little to offer in the way of amenities, but that was deceiving. One of the other dayrooms served meals cafeteria style and one was even a restaurant. The remaining 3 were

used as recreational rooms. Not being one to waste his money, Travis was using the shelters as community facilities.

The sole exception to Las Vegas being an airline destination was the Survival School. Attending the school was an expensive proposition and most folks couldn't afford it. First there was the airfare to Vegas, attendees being the only passengers actually flown to the city. Then there was the cost of the school itself, which wasn't cheap. For all of their money, attendees were trained by ex-special forces troops and Ron and received a complete set of 'surplus' military equipment including an Interceptor vest. Most of the attendees were people interested in becoming security guards and the like in their home communities. For this reason, and this reason alone, the survival school classes also included instruction in security and Jim and Ed ran that part of the course.

Sandy was the principal of the school system and considering how small Las Vegas was, had a lot of students. They had gathered the schoolbooks from around Clark County and although some of the material was dated, most was as good in 2017 and 2018 as it had been in 2000. Travis had installed a second floor in one of the unsecure warehouses and that's where school was held. They taught the basics, reading, writing and arithmetic. There weren't any, or many at least, universities around the US so the education was far more practical, as I mentioned before. In 2017-2018, the only institutions of higher learning in the US were the military academies.

On the world scene, the UN had been reestablished in Brussels, Belgium so the French and Germans could wield their now considerable influence. The most powerful nation in the world was perceived to be the Commonwealth of Independent States, Russia to us hillbillies. But that was only because the US wasn't projecting its power. The American Navy had basically survived intact, having been ordered to sea for some unexplained reason the day after Christmas, 2009. With 40 minutes advance notice, the Air Force had most of its planes aloft when the attack came and the Army and Marines had taken shelter. And, despite all of the problems on the home front, the US military had maintained its hidden presence in the world's oceans. There was a lot more going on than most people knew in early 2018.

Once a General begins to accumulate stars on his or her collar, promotions sometimes come slowly, if at all, or rapidly if the powers that be decide to advance his or her career. Al Clark was now a Lt. General in charge of a reactivated Corp.

“General officers are nominated for promotion by the President of the United States, and confirmed by the Senate. You can't get more 'political' than that. The services hold in-service promotion boards to recommend officers for general officer promotion to the President. When vacancies occur (a general officer gets promoted or retires), the President nominates officers to be promoted from these lists (with advice from the Secretary of Defense, Secretary of the applicable service, and the Service Chief of Staff / Commandant).”

Stretched as it was, the budget of the US couldn't afford more new warships and in a desperate move to get more assets afloat, the Navy petitioned Congress first for more carriers and when that failed to upgrade and recommission the 4 Iowa-class battleships. Iowa was berthed in San Francisco Bay, New Jersey was in New Jersey, Missouri was at Pearl Harbor and Wisconsin was at Norfolk. In the 1980's in an effort to get his 600-ship Navy the 4 battleships had been upgraded and recommissioned. It seemed that every time the Navy wanted to project more force and was short on money, they drug out those battleships, upgraded them and recommissioned them.

Iowa needed the most work; they had never repaired the number 2 turret. However, the repair parts were stored in number 2 turret. During 2016 and 2017, the 4 ships were brought back to fighting trim and sent out for sea trials so the new crews could learn how to operate the ships. Before the installation of the cruise missiles in the 1980's the battleships could only project their power to the range of their 16" guns. A 16" gun could deliver an armor piercing projectile 36,900 yards and bombardment projectiles 40,180 yards. The ranges given are for the 45 caliber guns, not the 50 caliber guns of the Iowa class battleship. "The superb 16in/50 gun (probably on balance the best battleship gun ever built) fired a super heavy 2700lb AP shell (the previous 16in AP shell weighed 2240lbs) at 2500fps, for a range of 42,345 yards at 45 Degrees elevation." Adjust accordingly.

The CIS had made a bid to challenge the US Navy's supremacy at sea, and in 1980 they commissioned the first of a class of four Kirov-class 28,000t nuclear powered guided missile battle cruisers, good for 33kts. The only ships in the world big enough and fast enough to counter these were the four Iowa class battleships. During the years after the war, the CIS had refitted the 4 Kirov-class vessels. The US Navy was forced to counter by recommissioning the Iowa-class battleships. One nice thing about the US Navy was that they didn't throw a lot of ships away. They put them in reserve fleets that could be refurbished and recommissioned for active duty.

The reserve destroyer fleet was made up of the retired Spruance-class destroyers. There were only 4 Ticonderoga-class cruisers in the reserve, Ticonderoga, Yorktown, Vincennes and Thomas S. Gates, forcing some of the other cruisers to be reassigned. A battle group would consist of 1 battleship, 2 cruisers, 6 destroyers, 4 frigates (Oliver Hazard Perry-class, recommissioned), 2 688I class submarines and replenishment ships. It was the best the Navy could do to combat the CIS 'threat'. A strike group would consist of a carrier, 2 cruisers, 4 destroyers, 1 frigate and 2 688I class submarines. The boomers still hid at sea and the Virginia class subs roamed littoral waters. The 3 Sea-wolf class subs were assigned to JSOC.

Where was all of this leading, was the country preparing for war? Yes and no. They had to counter the threat posed by the 'most powerful nation'. In fact, much of the rebuilding of the US was funded through military contingency programs. That's what paid for the railroads. And, it probably explained why the government didn't fund the airlines; we had an air force already. Some of that air force consisted of repossessed airliners that had

been used to guarantee loans by the government. A lot of the reserve air fleet had been in the hands of the civilian airlines.

If you had been keeping track of things, you also knew that the US Air Force had retired 33 of the B-1B Lancers in 2003-4. Eight of those planes were placed on display and 10 were put in a reserve fleet. The remaining aircraft would be cannibalized for parts. Twenty-four of the 33 aircraft were capable of being returned to service and the Air Force competed with the Navy for funds to just that. The program was approved by a close vote in the House and Senate with the deciding vote being in each case, the Las Vegas vote. You do remember the votes that they owed the Air Force for the Strike Eagles, right?

In the spring of 2018, the US was recovering nicely from the events of 8 years before. The military was at an all-time high since Vietnam, in terms of forces and strengths and for the first time in memory, no one looked to the United States to resolve any of their problems. The US hadn't rejoined the UN and had pulled out of all of things like NATO and SEATO and the alphabet group of organizations. The only ally that the US considered itself to have was the British Commonwealth of Nations, principally, the UK, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. To be sure, there were a lot of other members, but they weren't necessarily major powers, except perhaps for India and Pakistan. All of this would become important, you see, on and after April 1, 2018.

The Gordian Knot – Chapter 20 – The Day The Russians Came

They didn't come to the United States, if that's what you thought when you saw the title of the chapter. Hell no, they had spy satellites and they could see the American buildup. They could see the test flights up at Area 51 where the Air Force was working out the delivery problems with the B-1B Lancers. They could tell that the US was arming itself to the teeth and rebuilding a much different country than had existed before the war. Why on earth would the CIS do a darn silly thing like that? And, it wasn't really the CIS anyway, a lot of those countries had joined NATO, remember? It was a show by the Russian Federation (Russia).

The final death toll in the war of 2010 for the US had been 210 million and Chinese losses were estimated at over 1 billion. Deaths during the 20th century were estimated by some at 180 million and up to 285 million by others, about 56 million from WW II alone. One could talk about the Holocaust, but those deaths represented about 10% of the total deaths. What about the estimated 20M-30M Chinese killed by Japanese in the Rape of Nanking? It's all a question of perspective, isn't it? Or, is one example of genocide worse than another?

On the morning of April 1, 2018, Russian forces invaded Poland, Slovakia, Hungary and Romania opening a front that was thousands of kilometers long. They used all of those aircraft and tanks they didn't have and in a blitzkrieg advanced well into the countries before NATO could react. All of the countries listed had been NATO members for a very long time. And, none of those nations had anything much in the way of a standing military. In the same order, their total military amounted to 217,000, 39,000, 44,000 and 207,000. Allegedly, Russia only had 1,520,000 members in its military. Allegedly. But as you all know there is more than one way to bolster an economy; provided you don't go broke in the process. What Russia lacked years before was the wherewithal to exploit its natural resources. The country hadn't had that problem for a number of years and those Euros and Pounds had been used to restore the country's military to a level surpassing its greatest Cold War force.

Russia covers 16,995,800km² and is about 1.8 times the size of the US. It has a wide natural resource base including major deposits of oil, natural gas, coal, and many strategic minerals and timber. In 2018, the population was in excess of 200 million having reversed earlier trends of a negative population growth. A 2004 CIA estimate had put the military manpower-fit for service at 30,600,088. And, I presume that you noticed that none of the CIS members were included in the list of countries invaded. The 11 original member states were Azerbaijan, Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Ukraine. In December 1993, Georgia also joined the CIS in somewhat controversial circumstances, following a civil war in which Russian troops intervened on the side of the Shevardnadze government.

You might ask yourself why would Russia do something stupid like invade Eastern Europe? I don't know, because it was closer than Western Europe? Or, was it because the European Union (EU) had denied Russia membership? The EU didn't view Russia as

'appropriate' for membership or something like that; I didn't get the whole story. Maybe Moscow figured that if they couldn't join the EU, the EU could join them. It didn't happen when it was predicted to either. Most of the Cold War estimates of what would happen in Europe were wrong because they were all predicated on the old Soviet Union.

In the US, no one would have known a thing about the Russian invasion had not someone with a big mouth blabbed it to a TV newsman. Oh, yeah, we finally had some TV back on the air in April of 2018. It was mostly news programs and reruns because Hollywood was gone. It was nice to see that if they had just a little bit of information those news reporters could still turn it into a full story, complete with estimates from a new set of military experts. Of course, if anyone really had any idea of what would be happening in Europe, it would probably be Gunny. He'd lived through most of the Cold War on active duty as a Marine.

"During the cold war, the army always expected the Soviets to build up their forces in their satellites and stage a massive land attack on Europe," Gunny explained. "Them Ruskies had one hell of a tank force and everyone just expected them to blitzkrieg Europe. It was a tactic they'd learned from the Nazi's in the big one. It was going to be mostly an Army war. The US developed attack helicopters during Nam and they built the Apache to counter the Russian tank threat. We also came up with that Abrams MBT. Then, when the wall came down, it didn't seem likely that Russia was much of a threat anymore."

Russia had found that the T-80 successor to the T-72 was vulnerable and developed the T-90 to overcome those vulnerabilities. Back in 1993, they had a new MBT on the drawing board, the T-95, but didn't build it because of financial problems. That was then and this was now. With their economic recovery, the Russians had a huge fleet of the T-95 and were even exporting the older T-90's. India had bought a lot of them (310) to counter the Pakistani T-85's. Lot of good that did them, the Pakistani developed the Al Khalid, MBT-2000, but that's another story entirely. During the years following the turn of the century, Russia began to build and field the T-95 MBT's. They also had new attack helicopters, the Ka-50 HOKUM aka Black Shark and the Ka-52 HOKUM B aka Alligator.

The Russians had been planning the attack for at least 2 years. Basically it involved dusting off their old plans and modifying them to allow for the change in circumstances since the wall came down. Instead of attacking from the countries of Poland, Slovakia, Hungary and Romania, they'd attack them first and then they could use their old battle plans. Then, they could attack Germany and France, just like they'd always planned. They sort of figured they could get away with it because the US had pulled out of the UN and NATO. It turned out to be a case of plans that were delayed, but not forgotten. They knew about the American buildup, but America had retreated into isolationism.

It is said that history repeats itself. It is also said that those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it. The UK was still a part of NATO, which considering the smallness of the British Army and Navy was an interesting thought. Britain had got-

ten into WW II when German attacked Poland. They got into WW IV when Russia attacked Poland and those other 3 NATO countries. Churchill had done about everything to get the US involved in WW II but the US had been in a period of isolationism and Roosevelt was reluctant. Only the Japanese attack on December 7, 1941 had gotten the US into WW II and then Hitler had declared war on the US and the US rushed to Britain's aid. See what I mean?

And, with those pitiful little military establishments, Poland, Slovakia, Hungary and Romania fell immediately. The Russian force that attacked Slovakia moved on to the Czech Republic and the forces that attacked Hungary moved on to Austria. The forces that attacked Romania moved on to Bulgaria. And, the forces that attacked Poland headed for Germany. And, those Russians weren't fooling around either; they'd been planning this for 50 or more years.

"I'd say Russia is a pretty big threat now, Gunny," Ron disagreed.

"Not to us their not," Gunny insisted. "We aren't the world's policeman anymore. And since we pulled out of NATO and the UN, I doubt we'll get involved."

"Why not?" Travis asked. "It's just natural for this country to get involved. We got involved in both of the world wars."

"Not right away in either case," Gunny reminded Travis. "WW I started when Austria-Hungary declared war on Serbia on 28Jul14. It wasn't until 6Apr17 that the United States under President Wilson entered the war to fight with the Allies. Britain, France, Australia and New Zealand declared war on Germany on 03Sep39 after Germany invaded Poland, but the war had its beginnings in 1936 when German troops occupied the Rhineland. The US didn't enter WW II until 08Dec41. In both instances, the US was isolationist, just like we became after the Chinese attacked us."

"I still say the US will get involved, Gunny," Travis retorted. "Your own recount of history proves it."

"I don't know, maybe you're right, but if we are going to get involved it should be sooner rather than later," Gunny replied. "We don't have a single asset in England or Europe since we pulled out of NATO. You can only fly a single Abrams tank at a time on a C-5 and we only have 100 or so C-5s in our fleet. Moving tanks to Europe will require ships and time."

"There was a time that we were going to use tactical nukes in Europe, if I recall," Travis pointed out.

"The tactical nukes the US has are the B61 bombs and the W84 cruise missile warheads," Gunny said, "And all of those W84s are in the stockpile."

“That’s not right, Gunny,” Jim said. “There are those W80’s for the Tomahawks. The W80, designed by Los Alamos, is deployed in air-launched and sea-launched cruise missiles. Approximately 350 nuclear SLCMs were produced, and all remain in storage. NRDC estimates that a total of 400 W80s are currently deployed to arm ACMs. NRDC also estimates that the W80-1 stockpile includes a total of 1,400 warheads remaining in stockpile associated with the 900 ALCMs that are in storage with their warheads removed.”

In the time that it took them to have that conversation, the Russians had advanced another 5 clicks. Hell, by the time the US got Abrams loaded aboard the C-5s and flown to Europe, the Russians would be eating strudel and drinking German beer. And, that was assuming that the US even chose to get involved. Fortunately for Europe, neither Wilson nor Roosevelt was in the White House. Congress reacted like someone had lit a fire under their chairs, demanding that the President move immediately to stop the Russians. The C-5s were already on their way to Europe but they didn’t hold any Abrams. They were filled with AH-64D Longbows. The chopper was 13’ 4” high and the cargo compartment of a C-5 was 13’ 6” high, they just fit.

C-17s fully loaded with munitions for the A-10 IIs were also airborne and every available A-10 II and Air Force F-35A was being ferried to England. The only limitation on the number of aircraft being sent was the availability of tanker aircraft. There were 59 KC-10s, 157 KC-135s and 75 KC-130s in the fleet. The current organic carrier tanker is the S-3B Viking, a family of aircraft that has served a number of roles including antisubmarine warfare and intelligence gathering. But the venerable S-3B’s days were numbered. Boeing and Northrop Grumman, which produced the F/A-18E/F series, had equipped the new planes to be converted as tankers. I’ll bet the Navy loved that. Air Force planes are refueled by boom while naval aircraft use the reel and basket. It wasn’t possible refuel the USAF planes using the S3B’s. Thus the limitation on getting US aircraft to Europe boiled down to the available tankers. On the other hand:

Transportability requirements were initially identified in the ORD and further defined in the AH-64D System Specification. Both configurations of the AH-64D, including any removed items and appropriate PGSE, shall be capable of being transported aboard C-141B, C-5A, or C-17 aircraft. The aircraft shall also be capable of being transported and hangar stored below decks in the landing platform helicopter (LPH) type carrier, Fast SeaLift ships, Roll-on/Roll-off, LASH, SEABEE ships, and Military Sealift Command (MSC) dry cargo ships. Additionally, the aircraft shall be transportable by military M-270A1 trailer and commercial “Air-Ride” trailer or equivalent. For aerial recovery, the AH-64D with MMA will be externally transportable by CH-47D aircraft using the Unit Maintenance Aerial Recovery Kit. Two AH-64D plus one FCR aircraft will be transportable by C-141, six AH-64Ds (with a minimum of three FCR mission kits) are transportable by C-5, and three AH-64Ds and three FCR mission kits are transportable by C-17. Whatever the hell a FCR (Fire Control Radar) mission kit is.

Let’s see, $109 \times 6 = 654$. $742 - 654 = 88$. $88 \div 3 = 30$. $222 - 30 = 192$ C-17’s to haul weapons stores. There were 742 Longbows available, 109 C-5s (2,960 NM maximum payload

range) and 222 C-17s (in-flight refueling). Of course an Apache only weighs 16,000 pounds, so the C-5 weren't loaded to payload capacity and could get to Great Britain just fine. The President put the whole operation together so fast that they didn't even have time to give it a name. How about *Operation Rescue the Frenchmen Again*? How's come if we never liked the French, we kept rescuing them? There was WW I, WW II and then when we really didn't like them, Vietnam. Were we still paying them back for helping during the Revolutionary War? We gave them Euro Disney, wasn't that enough?

So, the Russians had 9,650 tanks, including the T-95s, T-90s and the T-80s. And a Longbow carries 16 Hellfire missiles, as I remember. $642 \times 16 = 10,272$. Darn, there weren't even enough Russian tanks to go around. Between (among?) the J-35s, the A-10 IIs and the AH-64Ds there was some dispute about who got to destroy which target. So, if WW III lasted a few hours back in 2010, how long do you think WW IV lasted? Figure about a week to deploy all of our anti-tank assets, a month to do the deal and another week to fly everything we had left afterwards home. Six weeks just about ought to cover it.

But, how can that be? The Russians had all of those really neat aircraft, like the Su-37 Super Flanker, the Su-39 Frogfoot (also known as the Su-25T or Su-25TM), the Su-47 Berkut, the grand old MiG-29 Fulcrum, the MiG-31 Foxhound, the new MiG-33 Fulcrum, the MiG-35 MFI; not to mention the Ka-50s and Ka-52s. Well, the USAF did have some F-22's and some F-35's. The Raptors were in the second wave of aircraft sent to Europe. And, 'had' was the operative word in that sentence about all of the Russian aircraft.

"Sorry, Gunny but it was strictly an Army and Air Force show," General Clark explained.

"Ain't no official war if we weren't in it," Gunny insisted. "What happened over there?"

"By the time the President made that appearance before the special joint session of Congress, he had all of the Apaches aboard C-5s and C-17s and headed to England," Clark explained. "They also sent the all A-10 IIs and some of the F-35s. Used every cargo aircraft in the fleet and some of the commercial reserve fleet, like UPS and FedEx to drag it all over there. The Raptor's went next. While they were being ferried over there, they refueled the cargo aircraft and moved them to Europe and began to unload the Apaches and stores."

"NATO members had stalled the Russian advance slightly and that gave us time to get our stuff together," he continued. "Once they brought up the Raptors to provide air cover, along with the F-35s, the fun began. The report says that the Russian's had all of their latest fighters, but they were no match for our latest generation and the planes the French and Germans had. The A-10 IIs flew the first ground assault missions and took out a lot of tanks. Once there was some air superiority, they were joined by the F-35s and the Raptors ran CAPs. Then, they brought in the attack helicopters and began to decimate the Russian tanks. The Russians didn't stand a chance."

“Germans and French lose all of their ground equipment?” Ron asked.

“They pulled it all back and let the Russians advance relatively unopposed,” Clark said. “The only thing they fielded was tank killing ordnance. The only thing I can figure is that they figured they’d incur a lot less damage to their infrastructure by only attacking the tanks, BMPs and BPRs. Anyway, it took about a month to halt the Russian advance and destroy their armor. As soon as it was over, we packed up and came home.”

“So it was strictly air power?” Ron asked.

“As far as we were concerned, yes Ron,” Clark replied. “Congress wasn’t interested in getting involved in a protracted ground war, so all we lent was air assets. It gave us a chance to really test those Raptors and Joint Strike Fighters in combat for the first time. They did good.”

“I’m surprised the Russians didn’t go strategic once they realized they were losing,” Travis said. “We were on a heightened alert status the entire time.”

“You can stand down if you haven’t,” Clark said. “I think the Russians had satellite photos of the damage to this country and decided that if they attacked us, we’d wipe them out. We had tactical nukes but never employed them for fear that it would cause the Russians to escalate and get their strategic nukes involved.”

“We stood down when we got word that our people were coming home,” Travis replied. “So what’s going to happen next?”

“What do you mean Travis?” Al Clark asked. “Are you talking about the security of the country?”

“Yes. We had extremists blowing up bombs, an attack by the Chinese and North Koreans and now the Russian invasion in Europe,” Travis recapped. “I wonder what is going to happen next.”

“Nothing, if I’m any judge,” Clark said. “They totally closed the borders with México and Canada with our equivalent of the Berlin Wall. No vessel can enter a US port until its cargo has been fully inspected. No foreigner can get a VISA to come to the US until they’ve been given a thorough background check.”

“How can we do that?” Ron asked.

“We hired the Mossad, they have files on everyone,” Clark laughed. “And what they don’t have, Interpol does. “With nearly every adult in the US armed, it isn’t like it was before 2010. Not many people want to come to the US anymore.”

“Will the country ever be the same?” Travis asked.

“God, I hope not,” Gunny injected. “The pendulum has swung too far in the other direction.”

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